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Cultural Resistance in Contemporary Arab Cinema

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctorate Degree in English Language and Literature

Submitted by:

Hussein al-Mutahr

Supervised by:

Dr. El Houcine El Ouazzani El Ibrahimi

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Jury Members

Dr. Abderrahman Azennoud (President)

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Dr. El Houcine El Ouazzani El Ibrahimi (Supervisor)

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المقاومة الثقافية في السينما العربية المعاصرة

مقتضب

تحاول هذه الأطروحة استكشاف صور المقاومة الثقافية في السينما العربية المعاصرة من خلال تحليل الشكل والمضمون لتسعة أفلام روائية تُغطي الفترة من 2000 إلى 2018. وقد تم اختيار هذه الأفلام من مصر والمغرب واليمن على أساس صلتها الوثيقة بفكرة المقاومة في تجلياتها المتعددة. يختلف شكل المقاومة بالتأكيد وفقًا للسياق والوضع الذي يجد المستضعفون أنفسهم فيه. غير أنني جادلت بأن الرؤى والأشكال المتعددة للمقاومة التي صورتها هذه الأفلام تعمل، وبدرجات متفاوتة، لصالح بلورة سياسة الاعتراف المتبادل والتعددية الثقافية. إن الغرض الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو المساهمة في إفساح المشهد الثقافي ليشمل دمج التاريخ المُغيب في المجال الأكاديمي كي نطلع على العراك المعقد لصراع النفوذ من وجهة نظر المستضعفين. ولتحقيق هذا الغرض، تجاوزت هذه الدراسة النماذج التقييدية للتفسير مثل الشكلية والبنيوية والسيميائية والواقعية إلى نموذج التمثيل الخطابي الذي تتفاعل فيه البنى الفنية والسياسية ليس فقط للحفاظ على الهيمنة وإدامتها، ولكن أيضًا لدحضها وتحديها وحتى تغييرها بحثًا عن بدائل قائمة على العدالة. وعلى الرغم من عدم التخلي كليا عن نهج الدراسات الثقافية من أجل إيجاد ارتباطات من حيث السياق والتناص، إلا أن مقاربتي تعتمد في الأعم على الدراسات السينمائية ونظريات ما بعد الكولونيالية. لقد عملت الأفكار المستوحاة من الدراسات السينمائية ونظريات ما بعد الكولونيالية كمنظار لفهم وتحليل مصادر وفضاءات المقاومة التي أُثيرت في الأفلام قيد الدراسة في بنيتها الخطابية المعقدة والمتناقضة. ومع ذلك، فإن هذا لا يعني بالضرورة أن مثل هذه النظريات ليس لها عيوب منهجية أو حدود معرفية، ولا يعني أيضًا أنه لا يمكن اعتراضها من قبل الأفلام العربية. لقد توصل تحليلي للأفلام المعنية إلى نتيجة رئيسية مفادها أن المحاولات السائدة للحد من تدفق أنماط الإنتاج المضادة للهيمنة أو جعل الآخر بلا صوت ولا حول ولا قوة تفشل في أغلب الأحيان، إن لم تؤد إلى نتائج عكسية، حيث تبين قدرة الآخر على المقاومة بطرق لا حصر لها. فقد تم تصوير صراع النفوذ على أنه معقد وتحولي حيث يمكن للقوى المهيمنة أن تؤمن مصالحها، في أحسن الأحوال، جزئياً وآنياً ولكن ليس بشكل كامل ولا إلى الأبد.

كلمات مفتاحية: الثقافة؛ المقاومة؛ السينما العربية؛ السينما المصرية؛ السينما المغربية؛ الأفلام اليمنية؛ الإعتراف المتبادل؛ التعددية الثقافية.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to explore the images of cultural resistance in contemporary Arab cinema through content and form analysis of nine feature films spanning the period from 2000 to 2018. These films have been selected from Egypt, Morocco and Yemen on the basis of their close link to the notion of resistance in its various manifestations. The form of resistance definitely differs according to the context and situation in which the oppressed find themselves in. However, I have argued that the diverse visions and forms of resistance visualized in these films function, to varying degrees, in favor of articulating the politics of mutual recognition and multiculturalism. The main purpose of this study is to contribute to opening up the cultural space for the absented history to be included in the Academic domain so as to get informed of the complex contestation of the power struggle from the point of view of the oppressed. To fulfill this purpose, this study has gone beyond the restrictive paradigms of interpretation such as formalism, structuralism, semiotism and realism to the model of discursive representation in which the aesthetic and political structures interact not only to sustain and perpetuate hegemony, but also to refute, challenge and even change it in a quest for justice-based alternatives. While not completely abandoning cultural studies approach in order to make connections in intertextual and contextual terms, my approach is mostly informed by film studies and postcolonial theories. The insights drawn from the cinematic studies and postcolonial theories have actually served as a lens for understanding and analyzing the resources and spaces of resistance raised in the films under study in its discursively complex and ambivalent structure. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that such theories do not have methodological pitfalls or epistemological limits, and neither means that they cannot be challenged by Arab films. My analysis of the films in question has come up with a major finding suggesting that the dominant attempts to curtail the flow of the counter-hegemonic modes of production or to render the Other voiceless and defenseless fail for the most part, if not bring about reverse results, because the Other is shown to have the potential to resist in innumerable ways. The power struggle has been depicted to be complex and transformational where the interests of the dominant powers can be, at best, partly and momentarily secured but neither completely nor eternally.

Keywords: cultural resistance; Arab cinema; Egyptian cinema; Moroccan cinema; Yemeni films; mutual recognition; multiculturalism.

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Note on Transliteration

This dissertation follows the transliteration system adopted by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*, but with a few exceptions. For the sake of simplicity and readability, the diacritical marks are omitted except for the Arabic letters *ʿayn*, which is identified by a backward apostrophe (‘), and *hamza*, which is represented by a forward apostrophe (’). Personal names are rendered according to their common local usage or the individual’s preference when known (e.g., Gamal and not Jamal in the case of Egyptian and sometimes Yemeni names), and I have used wherever applicable the English version for names and places that are well known in English (e.g., Chraibi, Chahine, Lagtaa, kharboucha, Aden, al-Yemen, and New York instead of Shraybi, Shahin, Laqta‘, Kharbusha, Adan, al-Yaman, and Niyu Yurk). In personal names, the letter *waw* preceded by a damma is represented by (ou) instead of (u) like Nujoum, Kharboucha and Barsoum. In all these cases, personal and place names in Arabic are rendered in a form that can be easily recognized by readers in Eglish without straying so far from Arabic transcription. I use the definite article al-, and el- is only employed in the case of rendering the spoken Arabic for the sake of keeping with Darija pronunciation. Technical terms in Arabic that are not found in the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary like *shikha* and *‘Aita* are only italicized at the first mention within the text, with their English glosses provided in footnotes. Quotations from Arabic sources are not transliterated except when I feel that the phonetic value of the original text could not be captured by translation alone, like in the case of the popular songs in the Moroccan film *Kharboucha*. The films’ original titles are given alongside their English translations and year of release the first time they are mentioned in any section. On subsequent reference, films are usually referred to by their titles in English italicized. All translations from Arabic into English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that culture represents a vital site for power struggle; it has played and still plays an indispensable role in the operation of dominant ideologies and in resistance to them. For instance, the colonial powers have mainly rested on knowledge system by which they justify and maintain their domination on the cultural life of colonized peoples and hence on their territories. The imperial knowledge system has almost attempted to socialize natives into accepting or, at least, not resisting the colonial enterprises enrobed in the garb of the so-called civilizing mission.[1] That is to say, the colonial expansion has been promoted to have come for the sake of modernizing, civilizing and bringing progress to colonies and their backward people or for the purpose of making use of uninhabited spaces, which actually do not exist, for the benefit of human kind. Such knowledge system has simultaneously managed to socialize Europeans to "appreciate and belong loyally, often uncritically, to their nations and traditions, while denigrating or fighting against others."[2] Further, in the imperial discourse, colonial atrocities are either rendered invisible and sometimes accidental or justified in the name of fighting against the barbaric menace.[3]

However, the fear of emergence and development of cultural resistance by which imperialism would be challenged and resisted on the theoretical and practical levels seems to have ruled and still rule the colonial and neocolonial conditions. Because of being afraid lest readers or spectators could be stirred up by new counter-imperialist narratives, the colonial authorities have attempted to repress marginalized literature at home and national culture abroad. This was implemented through interrelated processes such as blocking subversive literature from emerging in the literary canon, imposing rigid restrictions over local means of cultural production and stripping the colonized people of their economic bases that would enable them to produce or disseminate an alternative discourse to that offered by colonialists and Eurocentrists.[4] It is on this account that the prominent anti-colonial theorist Amilcar Cabral emphasizes that

[1] The process of socializing the dominated groups or individuals into accepting the norms and mores of the ruling systems has been also manifest in nationalist, class, patriarchal and even religious discourses.

[2] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. xiii.

[3] The above-mentioned discursive operation of empire can be detected in reading Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Philip M. Parker (San Diego: ICON Group International, 2005).

[4] For details about the colonial attempts to control the cultural and economic realms, see chapter 1, section 2 of this dissertation, pp. 43-46.

"national liberation is necessarily an act of culture,"[5] and "cultural resistance (indestructible) may take on new forms (political, economic, armed) in order fully to contest foreign domination."[6] The growing postcolonial emphasis on the ultimate value of the cultural flow in the counter-hegemonic direction demands a closer look at the way cultural productions are used to resist, challenge and even change power relations.

Therefore, this dissertation focuses on identifying how resistance operates in one of the most influential mode of cultural production, cinema, which has tremendously contributed to the rise and spread of colonialist and Eurocentric epistemology as well as to that of counter-hegemonic discourse. More specifically, it examines the representation of cultural resistance in contemporary Arab cinema through in-depth analysis of nine feature films spanning the period from 2000 up to 2018. These films are selectively chosen from Egypt, Morocco and Yemen on the basis of their link to the overall objective of contesting the normative values and patterns of dominant representation and hence transforming unequal power relation in its various manifestations. Although a comprehensive examination of all Arab films on resistance is beyond the scope of a single study, this dissertation is thought to allow for a more extensive analysis of the most salient forms of resistance in Arab cinema.

The selected films respond to numerous forms of domination, including colonialism and Western-centrism, capitalism, religious essentialism, authoritarian nationalism and parenting, and social hierarchy in its ethnic, racial, class, gender and age structure. In so doing, this study attempts to break away from the dominant mainstream cinema in favor of non-mainstream alternative film forms so as to accommodate the voices that have been denigrated, silenced, and/or excluded in the elitist discourses as well as the issues that have been ideologically socialized as taboos. In the films under analysis, the filmmakers bring the plights of the marginalized and alienated people to light and provide insights into how their strategies of resistance could be endorsed as necessary and legitimate responses to the experiences of oppression in their different manifestations. This is what places their films outside the mainstream cinematic discourse.

[5] Africa Information Service, ed., *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review, 1973), p. 43.

[6] Ibid., p. 40.

Building on Michel Foucault's central premise of the relationship between knowledge and power[7] and Edward Said's influential view of the interplay between culture and imperialism on the one hand and culture and resistance on the other, it is possible to read some of Arab films within the frame of resistant culture on the assumption that they are informed, supported and enabled by a challenging culture giving the subjugated people a compass for their thoughts and a license for their acts. Although my analysis of the films in question would reveal the complex, relational and dynamic nature of resistance, I argue that the various forms of resistance and the means by which they are enacted in the films under study function, to varying degree, in favor of articulating the politics of mutual recognition; they arguably seek to bring about social transformations such as rectifying colonial and national elitist bias, creating minority freedom and civil liberties, and paving the way for women's emancipation and multicultural identities. Therefore, far from fostering the culture of antagonism, misrecognition or revenge, the political objectives behind the filmmakers' contestation of power relations from the point of views of the oppressed are most likely to make the dominating powers realize that the oppressive practices would add further complications not only to the state of the dominated but importantly to their own state. This means that the politics of domination appear to be approached as more of a predicament than an advantage in the sense that they would really complicate human relationships more than they would secure the interests and privileges of any of the parties.

Key to my argument is the assumption that the films under analysis locate the voices of resistance and agency in those who stand aloof from bias and bigotry in their different types and keep consciously skeptical and critical to what is ought to be upheld or refuted, because they can hardly ever be led by essentialist ideologies, be they packaged in conservative or secular milieus. Thus, this study goes against Gayatri Spivak's seemingly essentialist argument of the gendered subalterns' incapability to develop autonomous consciousness and to gain a sense of socio-political and cultural agency; they are, for her, doubly oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy, and their situations are often exacerbated by the Western and national elitists' sympathetic

[7] Foucault's model of power/knowledge relationship has significantly drawn attention to how power relies mainly on knowledge system, which, in turn, functions to perpetuate and maintain domination. His argument of the intermarriage between knowledge and power represents the premise from which Said sets out, in his *Orietalism*, to examine the link between Western textual representation and domination. However, Foucault's paradigm of power relation appears to suffer blind spots derviving from his oversight of the political force of the considerable outpouring of colonial and anti-colonial discourses. For further information, see pp. 39, 40, 77, 78, 92 and 93 of this dissertation.

presumptions to speak for them. Instead, this treatise goes for the capability of the subalterns, both women and men, to recuperate their autonomous consciousness and to voice their socio-political agency. It contends that the strength of resistance in the contemporary Arab cinema lies primarily in the capability of the subalternized people to craft counter-hegemonic consciousness upon which a strong basis of critique and resistance is established.

With the focus of the questions of power and resistance as modes of thought and practice, my aim is neither to posit the marginalized individuals and minority groups as innately upright and generous nor to condemn those of the dominant classes as a source of social ills in the society or to even reduce their socio-political, economic and cultural achievements. Rather, far from ethnocentrism and essentialism, the aim of this study is to examine the images of cultural resistance in Arab cinema as well as the discursive ways in which they are communicated. It seeks to provide deeper insight into why, how and under which conditions resistance is articulated in the feature films under study. In other words, it attempts to identify how Arab fimmmakers have utilized thematic and stylistic features to dismantle and delegitimize oppressive ideologies and practices in favor of rebuilding an alternative legitimacy, the legitimacy of resistance. Thus, this study works through two interrelated operations: critique and resistance, deconstruction and reconstruction. To illustrate more, it tries, on the one hand, to provide critique of the hegemonic discourse in its colonialist, Eurocentric, nationalist, and other essentialist garbs through delving into the world of Arab feature films. On the other hand, it strives to identify how Arab filmmakers rebuild discursive struggle for decolonization, multiculturalism, democratic nationalist citizenship and social justice as a whole, and how the visions of resistance in the filmic texts help create "a world of reciprocal recognition,"[8] to borrow Frantz Fanon's words.

The choice of this topic derives its relevance and significance from several motivations. First, it draws its importance from the vital role counter-hegemonic visual culture, including non-mainstream filmic discourses—works that run contrary to the writings and screenings of the dominant mainstream norms and patterns of representation—is to play in the reconfiguration of unequal power relations. This really fuels my curiosity to unearth the forms and visions of resistance that Arab cinematic modes of production would articulate. Moreover, the forms and

[8] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 170.

means of resistance are expected to differ and change according to the context and situation in which the marginalized and alienated people find themselves in. Consequently, it seems interesting to examine the likely complex and changeable responses that Arab non-mainstream cinema would endorse and the values it would impart to resist the ambivalent structures of power.

Second, cinema, in fact, represents an important site where wars are culturally "fought with the weapon of style and theme,"[9] to use the phrase of Dudley Andrew. A case that speaks directly about the importance of cinema in the power struggle is Jack Shaheen's *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Shaheen alerts us to how the stereotyping, caricaturing and ugly portraits forged about Arabs in Hollywood films have been as devastating as the battle fought with soldiers and cannons. Shaheen wonders of what the future holds for us if such hostile images still flow. He comes to the conclusion that the Americans and Arabs can only be brought closer together if the Hollywood's future films "humanize the Arab as a matter of professional filmmaking principle."[10] This stresses the dire importance of relocating the imperialist loci of knowledge with a counter-imperialist discourse by which cultural or racial differences are to be approached as a matter of mutual enrichment rather than as a mental blockade against human interaction and consensus.

Third, Arab cinema almost exists in colloquial dialects. As a result, this study tries to make it more accessible to a wide variety of readers and researchers, many of whom are either only proficient in English or at most have little proficiency at standard Arabic let alone the colloquial dialects. On this basis, this study is meant to help them understand the underlying significations and submerged metaphors embedded in the Arab filmic discourses. Fourth, the films under study, despite being produced in the two decades of the twenty-first century, chronicle different periods of Arab history and open up spaces for resisting various forms of marginalization. This represents another motivation to investigate the topic of resistance in such diverse works.

Last, but not least, I have come across many writings and studies that extensively examine different aspects of Arab cinema such as the historical development, economic structures,

[9] Dudley Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema," in *Remapping World Cinema*: *Identity, Culture and Politics in Film*, ed. Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), pp. 22-23.

[10] Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).

cinematic infrastructures, funding, film production, co-production, distribution, and issues of censorship and spectatorship. However, what seems to be missing or, at most, less examined in this abundant literature is an effort to study the representation of the cultural resistance in contemporary Arab films in a holistic and synthetic way. Further, some studies appear to be marred by methodological pitfalls, and some others seem to be either limited in the scope or so broad that the idea of resistance is not sufficiently addressed. To spot the gaps that the previous studies left out, I shall conjure up a precise review of the most pertinent literature, saving more detailed discussion for chapter 1, section 3. My methodology in the review of the previous studies goes from general to particular and from the most pioneering filmmaking context to the least.

The existing corpus of literature on Arab cinema provides definitely a panoramic picture of many aspects of Arab cinema, as mentioned above, but such corpus still suffers from several inadequacies, particularly in relation to the analysis of the multidimensional aspects of cultural resistance. Some scholarly books that were published on Arab cinema appear to be so broad in the scope that they either provide short synopses of films or contextual and theoretical insights, with slight reference, if any, to case analysis. Among these studies are Ibrahim al-Ariss', a renowned Lebanese film critic, anthology *Al-Sinima' al-'Arabiyya: Tarikhuha wa-Mustaqbaluha wa-Dawruha al-Nahdawi* (Arab Cinema: its History, Future and Evolutionary Role, 2014) and his masterpiece *Al-Sinima' wa-l-Mujtama' fi al-Watan al-'Arabi: al-Qamus al-Naqdi li-l-Aflam* (Cinema and Society in the Arab World: Critical Dictionary of films, 2015). Although Al-Ariss's anthology gives extensive coverage of Arab cinema through tackling its various aspects, the idea of resistance is only hinted at through a critical discussion of the development of alternative modes of Arab cinematic discourse that break the triple taboos of religion, woman and politics. Put differently, this anthology provides no textual analysis to illustrate how resistance operates; how the mechanisms of power and dialectics of resistance interact in the filmic text. As the title suggests, his second book is a critical dictionary in which he offers a short critical synopsis of two hundred films chosen to express the relationship between cinema and society and to explore the social development during nearly a century through the lens of cinema. Although his masterpiece draws our attention to how Arab films have significantly responded to social concerns, including liberating struggle, social justice, gender equality, and the articulation of the marginalized voices at large, it still lacks in-depth analysis.

Besides, some studies methodologically approach cinema as a window to read the socio-political transformations taking place in a society. That is, they examine Arab cinema within the frame of social realism. Reading cinema from social-realist approach seems inadequate to analyze the complex dialectics of power relations, particularly if realism is understood as a mere reflection of reality. To further evidence the limitations of realism, two studies that examine the question of gender identity in the Egyptian context are brought into discussion. In this respect, Aya Mohamed Ateya's "Women Empowerment as Portrayed through the Egyptian Cinema" analyzes the representation of women empowerment in Egyptian films produced between 2001 and 2011 and then compares her findings to those of the previous studies. She comes up with the conclusion that their images have favorably changed, and such positive change mirrors the transformation that has taken place in the Egyptian society. By the same token, in her article "Egyptian Film and Feminism: Egypt's View of Women through Cinema," Wesley D. Buskirk uses social approach to explore the position of women in Egyptian society through the lens of cinema, arguing that there is a parallel between the image of women in Egyptian films and social development.

In a similar vein, in her two books *Francophone Voices of the "New" Morocco in Film and Print* and *Screening Morocco,* Valerie Orlando uses a juxtaposition of historical and social approaches to track down the socio-cultural and political transformations reflected by both film and print. She argues that the open, democratic climate fostered by King Mohammed VI has enabled Moroccan authors, filmmakers and journalists to touch upon sensitive and taboo issues that were once difficult, if impossible, to tackle. She brings up to the fore a wide range of politically engaged writings and films that document, for example, issues of poverty, political corruption and exploitation of children, the suppressed memory of the so-called Lead Years, women's struggle for emancipation in a patriarchal society and the question of liberal identity. Orlando, indeed, offers solid plot summaries and interesting content analysis of a number of films and prints and alerts us to how a critique of the injustice exercised in the past helps prevent its recurrence in the present and future. She also draws attention to how questioning of the everyday problems helps implement democratic reforms. Nonetheless, her accounts are marred by a certain methodological limitation represented by reading films and prints "as sociocultural

and political reflectors of contemporary life."[11] Besides, she does not synthesize her analysis of the film's content with that of the formal components.

The defense of the version of the "real" would only lead critics to an impasse, because essentialism cannot be refuted with counter-essentialism. Further, the reality claimed to be reflected by the cinematic medium is, in fact, constructed through the use of adapting process, script, mise en scène, cinematography, editing, and sound; that is, the film is structured and filtered in a way that fits with the vision or ideology the filmmaker intends to convey as well as with the aesthetic sensibility of the audience for whom the film is made. Conceived in this way, reality is neither transparent or self-evidently given, nor is it even one-sided. Hence, it cannot be understood apart from representation. In the view of Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "the emphasis on realism has often betrayed an exaggerated faith in the possibilities of verisimilitude in art in general and the cinema in particular, avoiding the fact that films are inevitably constructs, fabrications, representations."[12]

On this basis, my concern is not to privilege subalternized discourse for being 'real' and disprivilege hegemonic discourse as 'unreal'. I privilege resistance for its epistemological aspect rather than for its ontological being, for its non-hegemonic vision rather than for the assumption of real coverage. This requires me to go beyond the restrictive model of realism to that of representation in order to deconstruct and refute the dominant historiographies and practices and then reconstruct non-hegemonic alternatives. The aforementioned studies show that the socially critical tendencies of realism do not provide us with deep insight to analyze the complex dynamics of power relations. Thus, it seems significant to identify how Arab and non-Arab researchers and critics engage with new approaches through which one can analyze the submerged forms of resistance in Arab filmic discourse.

I shall acknowledge that the idea of resistance in Arab cinema has been traced by authors whose works represent landmarks in the postcolonial studies on the methodological and epistemological levels. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* and Lina Khatib's *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* represent cases in point. Both accounts

[11] Valérie K. Orlando, *Francophone Voices of the "New" Morocco in Film and Print: (Re) Presenting a Society in Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. xv.

[12] Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction," *Screen*, vol. 24, no 2, 1983, p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.2.2>.

comprehensively pronounce the defensive position of Arab cinema in the face of Eurocentric historicizing, with Shohat and Stam providing more encyclopedic work in scope and approach; they offer an insightful analysis of a huge number of Third Worldist and minority films, along with a solid critique of imperialist media within a broader discursive network of intertextuality. By contrast, Khatib develops rich postcolonial theoretical insight, but her account gives an inadequate vision of Arab cinema on the practical level because she focuses on comparison between Hollywood and Egyptian films. No doubt, these two accounts give invaluable knowledge helpful to critique the Orientalist and Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge and analyze the Arab cinematic counter-telling and alterations. But, they do not elaborate on the Arab cinematic responses to the socio-politically internal problems like political imprisonment, corruption, early marriage and social hierarchy in its class, gender, profession, and age structure. That is, such studies give much focus to the cinema of decolonization or what Said calls "writing back" without accommodating other frames of resistance.

By the same token, Viola Shafik's *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*, provides a comprehensive contextualization of Arab cinema, using a combination of intertextual and contextual approaches to investigate the Arab cinematic connection with the preceding Arab-Muslim cultural arts like music, theater, fine arts, and literature as well as with the historical and political contexts.[13] Although she explores the Arab cinematic responses to the anti-colonial struggle and to the socio-political problems of the unprivileged classes, she neither gives us a comprehensive analysis of filmic text nor shows us how the strategies of resistance are articulated in the Arab filmic discourse.

In a quite similar manner, the existing literature on the Egyptian and Moroccan cinemas, of course, provide extensive coverage of various aspects, but the question of resistance seems to be less explored or, at most, dealt with in an insufficient way. For example, some studies like "Nationalism and otherness" by Lina Khatib and "Framing Political Islam in Popular Egyptian Cinema" by EIlhem Allagui and Abeer Alnajjar are limited in the scope since they are exclusively devoted to the critique of the essentialist representation of the Islamic movements in the dominant mainstream discourse. However, they could not go beyond criticism, simply because the Islamic fundamentalists are not given the floor to voice their alternative vision.

[13] Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: The University in Cairo Press, 2007), pp. 2-4.

Other studies are totally concerned with examining the works and filmmaking career of a specific film director like Malek Khouri's *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema*, Kevin Dwyer's *Beyond Casablanca* and Hamid Tbatou's "Al-Jasad fi Aflam Abdelkader Lagtaa bayn Hurqat al-Raghba wa-Qahr al-Inmiha" (The Body between Burning Desire and Force of Confinement in Abdelkader Lagtaa's Films). All of them provide insightful analysis of the film directors' works, with Khouri giving a prolific account of the dynamics of resistance and the struggle for a more encompassing national identity within which cultural differences are to be celebrated. In contrast to Dwyer who seems less, if not, interested in cultural resistance than in crafting a complex vision of socio-cultural change and transition of Moroccan society through the eyes of M. A. Tazi and the themes raised in his four feature films, Tbatou implicitly invokes the idea of resistance through his appreciation of Lagtaa's resistance to the societal institutions that control woman's body through restrictions and prohibitions. That is, he reads Lagtaa's films as a mode of resistance to the patriarchal divisions of space, role and authority in a manner that privileges man over woman. Other studies like Sandra Carter's *Moroccan Cinema: What Moroccan Cinema?* seem invaluable for those who are interested in the historiographic analysis of Moroccon cinema in relation to production and reception, on the one hand, and to the various film genres and other cultural productions, on the other. But, it does not pay specific attention to the topic of resistance.

Recognizing these hiatuses in the production of knowledge on cultural resistance in Arab cinema, this study is meant to offer three main contributions. First, the most relevant studies I have found fall short of covering different forms of resistance for their limited focus on answering back to the colonialist and Eurocentric discourses. In this dissertation, Colonialism and Eurocentrism are just two modes of a number of discursive modes of domination and hegemony to which the selected films respond. Accordingly, this study is to be an addition to the present literature by exploring the topic on a much broader scale. Second, as illustrated above, and as Robert Stam and Louis Spence note, most studies of cinematic representations "tend to focus on certain dimensions of film—social portrayal, plot, and character," with "the slighting of the specifically cinematic dimensions of the films; the analyses might easily have been of novels or plays rather than films."[14] Thus, this dissertation attempts to provide a lengthy and in-depth analysis that considers not only the film's narrative, but also the cinematic

[14] Stam and Spence, "Colonialism, Racism and Representation," p. 3.

elements. Third, it tries to fill the gap concerning the way the topic is methodologically approached by using several theoretical insights, employing mainly tools from film studies and postcolonial theory, along with the occasional use of cultural studies approach. Merging such different approaches help disclose meanings that would remain hidden if the analysis exclusively relies on a single approach.

To give more detail about the methodology used in this research, I specifically use the conception of film art, as theorized by Rudolf Arnheim, Berys Gaut, Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi and Roger Scruton, to refute the causal and reproduction challenges that rule cinema out of its artistic status and hence strip it of its representational capacities. Their conception of film as art endows cinema with the power to communicate thoughts and visions about the world and enables readers to go beyond what is seen to the way it is seen. However, such conception remains overly schematic in the sense that it imprisons the representational potential of cinema within the paradigms of formalism and structuralism—the former concerns with highlighting the intense significations of the formal elements and the latter focuses on reading textual signs and metaphors apart from the context from which they emerge and develop. Thus, to account for the inseparable interplay between aesthetics and politics, text and context, the theory of film art has to be enacted within the framework of ideology and discourse. Here, I use the insights of some Marxist, feminist and postcolonial theorists, such as Louise Althusser, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Lura Mulvey, Jack Shaheen, and Edward Said, whose conception of ideology seems very helpful to analyze the ideological messages that are overtly stated or covertly submerged in the film form and content. The conception of film as ideology offers, of course, a solid ground upon which one can adequately critique the dominant mainstream cinema. But, it pays little attention to how power could be challenged and resisted. To takes into account the complex contestation of power and resistance, I shall place the theories of film art and ideology within Michel Foucault's notion of discursive representation.

The theoretical assumptions behind my analysis of the cultural resistance in the contemporary Arab films are mainly those elaborated by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Barbra Harlow and Subaltern Studies Group, particularly Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak. Their works offers possibilities for investigating the spaces of resistance in the films under study as well as the ways by which the subjugated people could recover their repressed (hi)stories. Fanon's specific analysis of the theme of recognition within the colonial context helps me undermine the

Western myth of "civilizing mission" and lay bare the colonial and neocolonial mechanisms of racism, exclusion and exploitation in Saad Chraibi's anti-colonial film *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000) and Youssef Chahine's *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004). His visions also offer analytical tools by which I can profoundly dismantle the claim that the 'wretched of the earth' is incapable to react because he is either unaware of the conditions of his own oppression or he is frozen in the state of submissiveness. Further, his endorsement of the revolutionary violence as the only effective means against colonial domination seems useful to reread the violence of the Moroccan natives in the film *Thirst* as important, legitimate and likely necessary to make an end of the colonial racial oppression and economic exploitation. In fact, Fanon's theory of resistance, although focusing much more on the struggle against racism, colonialism, and national essentialism, can be adapted and extended to include the struggle against the multiple forms of oppression. As the colonized desires to be mutually recognized as free and independent subject, other marginalized people have also the same desire. They aspire to be treated on the basis of freedom, equal citizenship and social justice. However, the means of resistance through which the subjugated people get their voices and their rights recognized differ according to the practices and the context of oppression.

To account for the power of the text in changing cultural context, I shall use Edward Said's notion of writing back to show how the filmic texts under study have the potential to "wrest back from the repressive authorities the control over cultural production."[15] Said's interests in the process of rewriting the colonialist historiographies in subversive ways, which disprove the Eurocentric stereotypes inflicted on the marginalized communities, groups or individuals, offer an analytical framework within which the discourses of decolonization in Chahine's *Alexandria . . . New York*, Chraibi's *Thirst* and Ben Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a* could be adequately interpreted. His theoretical perspective of resistance gives an impression that the mainstream dominant attempts to silence or distort the (hi)stories of the different Other would be rendered impossible, because the Other has the potential to write, as well as fight, back. Accordingly, the culture of mutual recognition and multiculturalism appears as an inevitable option. Significantly enough, his theoretical assertion of transcending national consciousness to that of social and human consciousness, which he mainly bases on Fanon's writing on the pitfalls of national

[15] Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 12.

consciousness, seems very helpful to unearth the limitations of nationalism in the Egyptian film *Hiya Fawda* (Choas) by Chahine and the Moroccan film *'Atach* (Thirst) by zChraibi.

Said's placement of his theory of resistance within an open frame of liberation can be adapted to relocate different types of domination. But, it seems appropriate to bring into discussion a more inclusive theory, which can concretely advocate different kinds of subalternity. In other words, to bridge the gap that Said apparently left out in terms of neglecting gender, class and age status of subordination, I shall use the subaltern studies theories as analytical tools to explicate various forms of the subalternized's resistance. To illustrate my use of subaltern studies project, I particularly use Ranajit Guha to argue that the marginalized subjects in the films under analysis are aware of the conditions of their oppression and hence they set out to challenge such hegemonic practices. That is, this study sees that their resistance stems from their own self-consciousness rather than from being mobilized by another consciousness such as that of the elites. Guha argues that recovering subaltern histories is not simply a re-narration of the past events but showing the awareness and consciousness of the subaltern subjects in making such histories. In addition, unlike Spivak who argues that the gendered subaltern cannot get their voices heard, this study refutes such generalization by bringing into discussion the powerful impact of female resistance, although to varying degrees, on destabilizing hegemonic authorities. This will be particularly dealt with in the two Egyptian films *Chaos* by Chahine and *Factory Girl* by Khan, the Moroccan film *Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal* by Hamid Zoughi and the three Yemeni films under study in which woman's voice is brought to the forefront in the fight for social justice.

To support my argument and accommodate the issues that have been raised above, this dissertation is divided into two parts: theoretical and analytical. The first part consists of two chapters and each one contains three main sections, with the second chapter preceded by an introductory section about the location of culture in postcolonial theory. The second part consists of three chapters devoted to the analysis of the discursive construction of resistance in nine contemporary Arab feature films. Taking into consideration the criteria, followed throughout the research, of going from the most recognized filmic context to the least, these chapters deal respectively with Egyptian, Moroccan and Yemeni features, with an average of three films per each case.

In the theoretical part, the first chapter provides conceptual and contextual framework of cinema and Arab cinema, along with literature review of the pertinent scholarship that have been written on Arab cinema. To be more specific, the first section tackles the conceptual transformations of cinema, with special focus on the two broad and almost overlapped definitions: cinema as art and cinema as ideology. It concludes by placing the inevitable interplay of art and ideology within the framework of discourse so as to read cinema as a text open not simply to the operation of power, but importantly to the articulation of resistance and agency. This section precisely reads cinema in terms of not only its artistic features and ideological functions but also its discursive potential to provide counter-hegemonic discourses. Reading cinema within the dialectics of power relation pushes me to dedicate the second section to questioning the relationship between Arab filmic text and context during the colonial and postcolonial periods. Thus, the second section delineates how the production and discursive formation of Arab cinema have been influenced, although differently, by the historical, political, social, cultural, economic, religious and linguistic contexts out of which it emerges and develops. It tries, however, to spot the common features that bring the Egyptian, Moroccan and Yemeni discourses together and the distinct specificities that mark each filmmaking practice across historical/temporal lines. Because I touch, through my contextualization of Arab cinema, that most of Arab filmmakers and historians appear to be almost absorbed in the trend of social realism, I try to illustrate how this approach is more problematic than one might think whether it is used as a style to make an illusion of reality or as a mental perception of reflecting reality. Consequently, the third section offers a critical review of the previous literature through which the limitations of the realistic approach are discussed in relation to those studies that opt for a mixture of realism and representation and those that approach cinema from the perspective of representation. This section also illustrates the points in which this study meets with the previous ones as well as the points of departure on the epistemological and methodological levels. This helps me spot the gap that the previous literature left out and hence select the theoretical scope within which cultural resistance in Arab cinema would be properly analyzed.

The second chapter foregrounds postcolonial attitudes of resistance. This chapter is initiated by an introductory section—recognized as first section—on the vital role of culture in the power struggle, illustrating how word has been as powerful as sword in the colonial and postcolonial conflicts. The second section deals with the theme of mutual recognition from the

perspective of Frantz Fanon, a leading postcolonial figure who has a direct experience of colonialism. It traces Fanon's exploration of the structure of colonialism and the mechanisms through which the colonized could achieve their freedom. The significant insight he offers into the psychology of the oppressed and the cogent route for their redemption is discussed in relation to his reformulation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic within the French colonial context. Bringing into discussion Fanon's rereading of Hegel's paradigm in the light of colonial racism and capitalism, this section explores the criteria upon which he endorses revolutionary violence as a precondition for freedom on the national and individual levels. However, this section does not reduce Fanon's theory of resistance to an incitement to violence whose position of it seems to be contradictory. His view of the role that the retrieval and rectification of the colonized's national history is to play in the anti-colonial struggle is discussed, with consideration of his reflection on the pitfalls of nationalism. In short, this section discusses the liberating framework that Fanon has set forth, along with its limitations, and its relevance to the films in question.

In the third section, much concern is placed on dismantling cultural hegemony through the eyes of a central postcolonial theorist and critic, Edward Said. While Fanon seems to be preoccupied with practical resistance, Said devotes much emphasis to the power of the word, to the production of postcolonial counter-hegemonic texts. This section unveils not only the formation of Orientalist and imperialist discourses, but significantly the rewriting of such discourses from the punctuations of resistance. It explains how Said's vision of resistance evolves from the mode of blame and criticism typified in his book *Orientalism* to the production of a liberating alternative articulated in his book *Culture and Imperialism.* It illustrates how Said's double front of criticism and resistance helps unveil as well as subvert the stereotypes that have been inflicted on the indigenous and alienated people in colonial and neocolonial texts and on the political detainee in the nationalist narratives. Although Said seems to turn a blind eye to other forms of resistance enacted against gender, caste and age discrimination, his significant theory of rewriting back could be appropriated to deconstruct all types of oppression. However, the mechanisms by which those marginalized groups or individuals like women, children and underclass citizens would articulate their socio-political agency cannot be adequately analyzed within Said's paradigm of knowledge.

To bridge the gap that Said left out in terms of not accounting for different attributes of subalternity, the third section deals with the subaltern studies theories that try to articulate

various kinds of subordination whether expressed in terms of race, class, caste, gender, age or of any other type. In the works of the Subaltern Studies critics, the subaltern histories are given important position and used as analytical tools to rectify various kinds of elitist bias. Although the Subaltern Studies Group have commonality represented mainly in their concern with rectification of the elitist historiographies, they also maintain their distinct specificities. One of the most differences discussed in this dissertation is their exploration of the marginalized's consciousness.

The analytical part offers content and form analysis of nine contemporary Arab films distributed equally and respectively between Egypt, Morocco and Yemen. The first chapter, like the two other chapters, contains three sections ordered according to the chronological production dates of films. This chapter is devoted to examining how contemporary Egyptian films problematize neocolonialist, capitalist, nationalist, religious and patriarchal predicaments, among other types of essentialist discourses and oppressive practices. The films analyzed in this chapter include Youssef Chahine's two films *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004) and *Hiya Fawada* (Chaos, 2007) and Mohamed Khan's *Fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl, 2014). My analysis of each film begins with a brief overview of the director's artistic career and a synopsis of the film's plot in relation to the idea of resistance.

The first section addresses Chahine's unthinking of Americocentrism in his film *Alexandria . . . New York.* It explores the image of the United States that has been so far confusing to the Arab world through bringing into discussion the interrelated questions of American racism, capitalism and imperialism. The second section addresses the predicaments of corruption and chaos in the Egyptian postcolonial context through a case analysis of Chahine's *Chaos*; it tries to examine the issues of chaos and corruption in their overlapping nationalist, religious, political, educational and familial dimensions, with particular focus on how national and religious essentialisms can make a country slide towards authoritarianism. Through a discussion of Khan's *Factory's Girl*, the third section provides critique of the patriarchal discourse, which marginalizes people on gender and class basis, and advances a counter-hierarchal view of social relations premised on the notion of reciprocal recognition. It sheds light on how lower-working women are to be considered as indispensable agents of sociopolitical and economic reforms. Unlike feminists' essentialist perception of love as a sign of women's subordination, my analysis of this film is going to offer counter-feminist representation of it; love

would be envisioned as a double effective therapy. On the one hand, it might fuel the gendered subalterns' vitality, hope and spiritual power and hence help them shift misery into felicity and turn material deprivation into spiritual richness. On the other hand, it might function as an effective medicine by which lower-class women could treat those who are psychologically secluded within the frames of gender and class identification.

The second chapter investigates the Moroccan cinematic responses to the colonialist, Eurocentric, nationalist and patriarchal historicizing through form and content analysis of the following three films: Saad Chraibi's *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000), Jilali Ferhati's *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention, 2004) and Hamid Zoughi's *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal, 2008). These films arguably craft counter-hegemonic knowledge narrated from the points of view of the colonized subjects, political detainees, and gendered subalterns. The first section explores the French colonial oppression and the plural resistance of the Moroccan colonized in Chraibi's *Thirst.* In a similar vein to Chahine's *Alexandria . . . New York*, which tries to refute the Eurocentric construction of the United States and the essentialist representation of the Arab world, this film questions the colonialist and Eurocentric claims that the White colonizers have brought civilizing mission to their colonies. It also tries to explore how the film discursively restore the agency of the subalternized groups, who work outside the frame of the national movement. Besides, it detects the reasons behind endorsing the colonized's revolutionary violence as legitimate and even necessary. In so doing, the colonial representation of the Moroccan native as either submissive or innately aggressive would be discursively subverted.

While the first section approaches the colonized's memory as resistance to the Western historicizing of colonialism as well as to the state's essentialist narration of nationalism, Ferhati's film, in the second section, retells the past repression of political activists from a perspective that runs counter to the dominant narrations of the Moroccan national history. The representation of political opponents as a subversive threat to the national security and of the recovery of the painful memory as a route for spurring hatred are profoundly questioned. Instead, my analysis of this film is going to illustrate how the regaining of the suppressed memory could contribute to reconciliation and thereby sustainable peace building. In this section, I try to compare how political imprisonment, a recurrent theme in Arab cinema, is approached in both Egyptian film *Chaos* by Chahine and Moroccan film *Memory in Detention* by Ferhati. The third section

attempts to examine the representation of the socio-political agency of the gendered subaltern represented by Moroccan *shikhat* (singular *shikha*)[16] in Zughi's film *Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal*. It tries to problematize how and why caid Aissa Ben Omar, a despotic local leader, has been able to militarily defeat the gendered subaltern's tribe, but he stands so vulnerable in front of her that he could neither silence her voice nor curtail the flow of her diatribe songs, which leads at the end to the sunset of his authority.

The third and last chapter in the analytical part examines the discourse of resistance in three Yemeni films, which are recognized as the only features to be produced from Yemen. These films go in line with their Egyptian and Moroccan counterparts in terms of the orientation; all of them appear to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses and rewrite them in revisionist ways. However, this chapter tries to show that spatiality does matter, to less or more extent, in dictating the thematic selection of the film director. The Yemeni filmic discourse appears to draw heavily on the discussion of man-woman relationships—issues that seem to contribute to an understanding of the complexity of human interactions in what is forged as a conservative context—through which the Eurocentric, upper-middle class nationalist and patriarchal epistemology would be dismantled and rebuilt from an iconoclastic perspective, celebrating the voices from below.

The first section analyzes the ambivalence of identity in Bader Ben Hirsi's *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a, 2005). This film profoundly questions the Orientalist reductive representations of the Arab world as well as the national elitists' discourse of exclusion. To be precise, in my discussion of this film, I try to problematize how human relations and social exchanges defy to be essentially determined by a set of class, gender or even religious constraints. I attempt to highlight how aspects of love and openness can beam from a context stereotyped to be blocked in the face of cross-cultural and cross-class communication. The second section is dedicated to the analysis of a pivotal child bride's resistance against the institution of patriarchy in its marital, familial, tribal, religious, legal and political forms as problematized by Khadijah al-Salami's *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am

[16] Shikhat or cheikhat is a term used in Morocco for popular female singers, musicians and dancers, often in a travelling troupe of entertainers. See Tahar Ben Jelloun, *The Punishment*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p. 142. But, in Zougi's film, shikha (singular) or what is referred to as Kharboucha is discarded from the essentialist and false sense of shame, because this concept is used for a female artist in the honored tradition of *aita*. Hence, their song and performance are clothed with subversive power.

Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced, 2014). In contrast to al-Salami's response to the forced arranged marriage and, symbolically, to the coerced relationship that might lead to separatism, the third section brings into discussion love relationship in Amr Gamal's *'Ashrat Ayyam qable al-Zaffa* (10 Days before the Wedding, 2018). This section explores how such relationship can be approached as a unifying force against the hegemonic politics of disintegration. Incompatible with the feminists' framing of love as a cause of women's oppression, my discussion of this film differentiates between love with justice and love without justice and explores the criteria that distinguish both of them.

PART I: THEORETICAL AND CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1: Rethinking Cinema and Arab Cinematic Discourse

Introduction

The power of cinema lies precisely in its representational function, in its capability to communicate thoughts about the world. Cinema on this account can be considered as a cultural terrain in which various political and ideological thoughts contest discursively one another. However, the representational capacity of cinema has been stung by the charge that rules out cinema of its artistic status on the assumption of being a mere mechanical reproduction of reality that leaves no room for human intervention. This charge, in fact, poses a methodological challenge to my reading of cultural resistance in Arab cinema, because one cannot analyze the contestation between power and resistance in the filmic text if cinema is taken to be a mere transparent recording of reality that necessarily stands in causal relations to its subjects. Therefore, this claim is going to be refuted on many counts, ranging from investigation of the historical genesis of cinema and the cultural shifts it has undergone to the discussion of the external and internal characteristics that make cinema a representational art. Although the theorists of film art like Rudolf Arnheim, Berys Gaut, Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi and Roger Scruton, as it is extensively dealt with them below, prove the creative and expressive capacity of film, they appear to pay less, if no, attention to the questions of how film functions and what the political purpose is of film art.

Thus, without neglecting the value of the film's style, this chapter tries to go beyond the formalist and structuralist analysis[1]—the former concerns with form over content and social reality while the latter focuses on reading signs within the text apart from the context from which they emerge—towards catching the ideological implications and political force of film art as Marxists, feminists, and postcolonial theorists have come to realize. It is on the account of the inseparable interplay of the dual aspects of art—the aesthetics and politics, the text and context—that Edward Said carries out hash attack on Derrida's idea of textuality and opts for Foucault's notion of discourse[2] and before that for Marxists' conceptualization of ideology, as it

[1] For further details, see Ruth Doughty and Christine Etherington-Wright, *Understanding Film Theory* (London: Palgrave, 2018), chapter 4 "Formalism" and chapter 5 "Structuralism and Post-structuralism."

[2] See Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 183-184.

is manifest in his *Orientalism*. This pushes me to define cinema within the realms of ideology and discourse, in terms of its relation to the economic, socio-political, cultural and even religious contexts from which it emerges. Setting from Said' argument of the dynamic interplay of text and context, the second section contextualizes the trajectories that Arab cinematic discourse(s) has undergone since the colonial period up to the contemporary era, with particular focus on the hurdles, transformation, and orientation that distinguish every cinematic context as well as the links that bring them together on the thematic and methodological levels. Since what have been covered by previous researchers in relation to my topic must not by any means be underestimated, the third section brings into discussion as much studies as possible in order to highlight the common threads between my study and theirs and to spot the gap that previous studies have left out. This also helps put the films under analysis in a theoretical framework within which they would be more thoroughly interpreted.

1.1. Questioning the Definition of Cinema: From Artistic Production to Discursive Practice

The definition of cinema has been very important for film theorists and philosophers, and it has continued to be debated and widely approached since the earliest discussions of cinema and up to now. The diverse approaches to cinema signify its complexity and dynamism. This stems basically from the profound shifts that cinema has been witnessing due to the technological evolutions and cultural transformations. Therefore, to define cinema, it seems necessary to delineate its historical genesis and the course of its subsequent development since, as David Bordwell states, "any film theory, classic or modern which ignores the history of the medium is likely to blind itself to counterexamples and plausible alternatives."[3] On this basis, re-reading the genesis of cinema helps disrupt the ethnocentric perspective that reduces the privileges of cinema's arrival to a single community and a sudden invention.

It is a truism to assert that culture has played a significant role in transforming cinema from the trend of attraction to that of narration. Cinema on this account has to be defined in relation to the culture that secretes it and the context from which it emerges. Setting from this background, this section brings into discussion two broad and almost overlapped definitions of

[3] David Bordwell, "Forward," in Noel Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. x.

cinema: cinema as art and cinema as ideology. Thoroughly understanding these two definitions requires answers to the following questions: What are the features that make cinema an art? And how can we refute the challenges that rule out cinema of its artistic status? Being produced by social agents who might use it to promote open or latent ideological messages, the subsequent questions are: How does cinema function and how can it be politically formed? On which ground has cinema been seen as ideology? Because the definition of cinema as ideology devotes much focus to the operation of power rather than on the articulation of resistance, this section concludes by defining it within the framework of discourse in order to account for its potential to question, challenge and even change the hegemonic discourse.

1.1.1. Problematizing the Genesis of Cinema

From its inception, cinema seems to defy straightforward description. This can be seen in the running debates over the beginning of cinema history. In this regard, there are a lot of authors who date it back to the late 19th century, indicating that the first public screenings were organized by the two prominent French technicians, Lumiere Brothers, in 1895.[4] In his discussion of the earliest film screenings, Erkki Huhtamo states: "the 1890s were, it was generally agreed, the period that gave birth to moving images."[5] These authors approach the genesis of cinema from a technologically determinate perspective, considering first films as forms of mechanized spectacle.

However, there are some authors who contradict this view point and criticize the idea of determining a specific moment of cinema's arrival. For example, Laurent Mannoni goes so far as to argue that "the invention of the cinema was a 'long march' which lasted for several centuries."[6] This means that the emergence of cinema was a culmination of many years of work and multi-accumulated efforts. Thus, locating a specific time point of cinema's arrival seems to

[4] See, for example, Christian Metz, *Language and Cinema* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p, 9; Deac Rossell, "A Chronology of Cinema, 1889-1896," *Film History*, vol. 7, no. 2 1995, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815166 (Accessed 24/05/2016); and Anton Kaes, "Silent Cinema," *Monatshefte*, vol. 82, no. 3, 1990, p. 246, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30155279 (Accessed 15 May 2016).

[5] Erkki Huhtamo, "Natural Magic: A Short Cultural History of Moving Images," in *The Routledge Companion to Film History*, ed. William Guynn (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.

[6] Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archeology of the Cinema,* ed. and trans. Richard Crangle (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), p.xvi.

reduce cinema to a mere technological advance without taking into considerations the historical and social contexts in which previous arts had played in the emergence of cinema. Besides, this reduction seems to be compatible with the below-refuted charge that sees cinema as a mere mechanical reproduction of reality in that it leaves no room for human intervention.

In this sense, one can come to realize that the rise of cinema was not simply a result of technical innovation, but also of historical, artistic and cultural factors. In his preface to the 1995 edition, Mannoni writes: "the dream of being able to project moving illuminated images on a wall or screen is almost as old, in the history of humanity, as the dream of flight."[7] In a similar vein, Nanna Verhoeff reads cinema in relation to its previously artistic and cultural resources. For Verhoeff, "the medium did not arise out of the blue; it was related to photography, which had been around for decades."[8] Moreover, the dominant story that attributes cinema invention to particular nations or specific inventors has been challenged. In his search for the historical archeology of cinema, Mannoni argues that "there was no single-handed inventor of the technique, spectacle and art of cinematography, but a long chain made up of many generations of researchers, all dependent on each other."[9] He adds, "Louis Lumière was only one of the links in the long cinematographic chain, which included many other researchers."[10] In line with Mannoni's argumentation, Robert Pearson contends that "the cinema…has no precise originating moment and owes it birth to no particular country and no particular person."[11] Such accounts provide a non-mainstream view whereby the multiple efforts in the emergence of cinema are recognized. Thus, the power of invention is not centered, but rather distributive among multi-cultural agents.

On this basis, cinema is to be understood as a multi-cultural mode of production and exhibition from its beginning, which can never be restricted to a mere technical device or a sudden invention. This introductory debate about the problematic genesis of cinema calls us to trespass the definition of cinema by its technological dimension since, as André Bazin says, "any account of cinema that was drawn merely from the technical inventions that made it possible

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Nanna Verhoeff, *The West in Early Cinema: After the Beginning* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p.127.

[9] Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow*, p.299.

[10] Ibid., p. 467.

[11] Robert Pearson, "Early Cinema," in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.13.

would be a poor one indeed."[12] In fact, the technical devices are invented within the social contexts and are therefore controlled by them. The impact of the cultural context on the filmic text is illustrated through the shifts that cinema has undergone from a site of spectacle to a means of expression; from cinema of attraction to cinema of narrative integration.

1.1.2. Cultural Shift of Cinema: From Attraction to Narrative Integration

Cinema has undergone massive changes. Within the first two decades, "films themselves developed from being short 'attractions', only a couple of minutes long, to the feature length that has dominated the world's screens up to the present day."[13] In their article "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning span the period of early cinema from 1895 until about 1914-1915. They describe two successive overlapping modes of film practice, which cover this period. They call the former "the system of monstrative attractions" and the latter "the system of narrative integration." In spite of the fact that there are no clear-cut distinctions between the two modes since the domination of one does not necessarily indicate an exclusion of the other, Gaudreault and Gunning emphasize that the first mode was so much characterized by an exhibition of spectacle or display. This mode mainly features curiosities or novelties through one or more shots whose connection were restricted to minimum. By contrast, the second mode is more concerned with the process of narration or telling a coherent story. Though the editing—by which the filmmakers make connection between shots—was of less importance to the first mode, the cinematic elements, like close-up, long shot, tracking shot and "editing" were generally used to serve the mode of attraction. By contrast, the function of the cinematic elements has changed, in the second mode, to serve narrative coherence.[14] In his study of cinema during the two early decades, Robert Pearson finds no way but to acknowledge that "many scholars have accepted Tom Gunning's distinction between the

[12] André Bazin, "The Myth of Total Cinema," in *What is Cinema?* vol. 1, trans. and ed. Hugh Gray (Barkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), p.18.

[13] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ed., *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.3.

[14] See André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed., Wanda Srauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 2006, pp. 373-376.

early cinema as a 'cinema of attractions' and the transitional cinema as a 'cinema of narrative integration'."[15]

In another article entitled "The Cinema of Attraction[s]," Gunning provides more details about the first mode referred to, here, as "the cinema of attraction[s]," as the title suggests. In this article, Gunning holds that "there is the extremely important role that actuality film plays in the early film production"[16] in comparison to the fictional film due to the "tradition in which realism was valued largely for its uncanny effects."[17] However, he concedes that both actualities and fictions were produced to mainly incite viewers' curiosity and excite their visual pleasure or to draw their attention to narrative detail through a thrilling display. So, he uses the term "cinema of attraction" to convey that early cinema, whether actuality or non-actuality films, was concerned with "presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power…and exoticism."[18] This proves that early cinema was swayed by the impulse of attraction "from the novelty period until the dominance of longer narrative films, around 1906-1907."[19]

The popular mode of cinema of attraction was later spoiled and driven underground because it was not recognized as an art. "Art," as Scruton illustrates, "is fundamentally serious; it cannot rest content with the gratification of mere fantasy, nor can it dwell on what fascinates us while avoiding al-together the question of its meaning."[20] That is, cinema started to be perceived not merely as entertainment and spectacle, but as an expressive art. So, such perception represented a cultural pressure under which the cinema of attractions has tremendously been transformed. William Guynn elaborates:

> Early cinema, with its direct appeal to the working-class spectator's desire to see cinematographic reproductions of celebrities, curiosities, attractive human bodies, comic gags, exotic locations, special effects, chases, and so on, was considered to be "vulgar"

[15] Pearson, "Early Cinema," p. 17.

[16] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early film, its spectator, and Avant-Garde," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed., Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 381.

[17] Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early film and (In)Credulous Spectator," *Art and Text*, 34 (Spring, 1989), p. 116.

[18] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]," p. 382.

[19] Tom Gunning, "Attractions: How They Came into the World," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed., Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 36.

[20] Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Spring, 1981), p. 602, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343119 (Accessed 01/11/2017).

> and "lowbrow": it was devalued the way we today might devalue supermarket tabloids or reality TV.[21]

Guynn, here, explains how the cinema of attraction was relegated to secondary position, because it was considered of less cultural value. The devaluation of the mode of the cinematic attraction is best exemplified in the earliest David. W. Griffith's Biograph films where he "did not dare put his name on the credits, lest his name in the legitimate theatre be undermined by his low-life escapades with celluloid."[22] This means that filmmakers, at the early stage, could not think of their films as works of art.

Therefore, the trend has then moved towards the process of developing the mode of narrative integration, illustrated above by Gunning. In this mode, the filmmaker, as a creative artist, has become more interested in the aesthetic and creative aspect of cinema. "In 1912," Pearson writes, "literary intellectuals became interested in the by then predominant fiction film, urging adherence to aesthetic standards to elevate the story film to art rather than 'mere' amusement."[23] They gradually come to think that "cinema is first and foremost an artistic medium before being a means of entertainment or a commercial, money-making business."[24] This introduces us to the definition of cinema as art, which is very significant to the current study. That is, we cannot analyze the representation of resistance in the filmic text if we exclude cinema from the arena of art, because the main working principle of art lies in its representational capacity, as argued by Roger Scruton.[25] Thus, the questions to be raised, here, are: what are the characteristics that make cinema an art? And how do theorists and philosophers refute the charges that exclude or, at least, reduce its artistic status? These two questions are going to be thoroughly discussed in the pages that follow.

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[21] William Guynn, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Film History* (Landon and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 28.

[22] Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 21.

[23] Robert Pearson, "Transitional Cinema," in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed., Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 37.

[24] Hatem Hamad, "Reflections on Poetic Cinema*," Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics,* no. 15, 1995, p. 281, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521694 (Accessed 19 April 2016).

[25] Scruton, "Photography and Representation," p. 577.

1.1.3. Cinema as Art

Within the space of art, cinema can be discussed in terms of external and internal characteristics. In other words, the perception of cinema as art derives partly from the intertextual relationship between cinema and other art forms and partly from the technological aspect that is more closely linked to the cinematic elements, represented mainly in editing. This calls us to deal with the artistic features of cinema both thematically and formally.

The external aesthetics of film is related to the connection between film and other art forms like novels, drama, painting and poetry. In this respect, filmmakers have tried to elevate the aesthetic position of cinema "by borrowing the prestige of those arts via literary and theatrical adaptations."[26] Consequently, cinema becomes a site of intertextuality in the sense that it borrows from other art forms for commercial and cultural reasons. This is apparent, for example, in the Egyptian film under study *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004) in which the director Chahine mingles music, play, dance, painting and scenes from his earlier films "to inflect the meaning of the text,"[27] to use Angela Vacche's words. In his discussion of Kamal al-Reyahi's research, "Cinema and Literary Text," Muhrez al-Garawi sees that

> the adaptation appeared in the history of cinema for two reasons: First, to invest the success and popularity of narration in order to make films based on novels be welcome by admiring public. Second, through the adaptation, cinema tried to gain a status at the eyes of the cultural elites similar to that of literature.[28]

The adaptation of literary texts for the screen is manifest in a lot of films that have been based on novels written by famous writers. For example, "Many of Abu Seif's films are based on novels written by Naguib Mahfouz, Ihsan 'Abdel Quddus, Yusuf al-Siba'i, Yusuf al-Qa'id among

[26] Guynn, *The Routledge Companion to Film History*, p. 28.

[27] Angela D. Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 3.

[28] Ibrahim al-Ariss et al., *Al-Sinima' al-'Arabiyya: Tarikhuha wa-Mustaqbaluha wa-Dawruha al-Nahdawi* (Arab Cinema: its History, Future and Role in the Renaissance (Conference)), (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2014), p. 323.

others."[29] The acquisition of aesthetics through adaptation is seen as external aesthetics. The film under study *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced, 2014) is also adapted from a novel by Nujood Ali and Delphine Minoui.[30] Nevertheless, the question to be raised, here, is: what are the internal structure and the cinematic techniques that make film an art?

The answer could be manifest in the seemingly well-grounded and defended argument held by several authors, especially classical film theorists, who argue that "cinema, despite its mechanical, photographic basis, is an art form."[31] In his *Film as Art*, the prominent early film theorist Rudolf Arnheim strongly defends the idea of silent film as art through his systematic refutation of the claim that "[f]ilm cannot be art, for it does nothing but reproduce reality mechanically."[32] For Arnheim, the refutation of the reproduction challenge represents "an excellent method of getting to understand the nature of film art."[33] As he illustrates, this challenge is premised on an analogy between painting and photography. It is reasoned in this way:

> In painting, the way from reality to the picture lies via the artist's eye and nervous system, his hand and, finally, the brush that puts strokes on canvas. The process is not mechanical as that of photography, in which the light rays reflected from the object are collected by a system of lenses and are then directed onto a sensitive plate where they produce chemical changes."[34]

The reproduction challenge maintains that film has to be excluded from the arena of art because of having photographic basis. Unlike painting where a painter is given possibilities to convey his/her intentions through his/her capacities to artistically manipulate painted image, a

[29] Hashem al-Nahhas, "Salah Abu Seif and the Cultivation of Realism and Enlightenment in Egyptian Cinema," Abstract, *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995, p. 273, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521694 (Accessed 19/04/2016).

[30] Nujood Ali and Delphine Minoui, *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2010).

[31] Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, P. 21.

[32] Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), p. 8.

[33] Ibid., p. 9.

[34] Ibid., p. 8.

photographer has no room to express his/her intentions, because he "can only literally present what can be placed before the camera."[35] Arnheim refutes the claim that photography and, thereby, film are mere mechanical reproduction of reality through demonstrating that there are "significant divergences between the image that the camera makes of reality and that which the human eye sees." [36] In painting, the painter is allowed "to get as far away from nature as is necessary to convey his artistic intention."[37] Likewise, Arnheim sees that "it is just these differences that provide film with its artistic resources."[38]

For Arnheim, such divergences between the film and its referent enable the filmmaker or director to express his/her thought. He provides several examples of how such deviations between the two images are utilized by film director for artistic purposes. Among the examples he offers are the camera perspectives, the absence of space-time continuum, and the lack of color and sound. He views that these cinematic tools make silent filmic representation deviate from the reality filmed. A long shot, for example, can make an object appear small and vague in a way that differs from reality, while a close-up can make the object appear enormous and clear in a way that also diverges from reality. In film art, such change in position of the camera can almost be used to signify meaningful expression and specific connotation. Also, the lack of space-time continuum allows the director to use the artistic potentialities of montage, by which film "[joins] together shots of situations that occur at different times and in different places."[39] The film director takes a hand in the process of filmmaking and creatively makes film differ from what is filmed.

In addition, by the reduction of color to white and black, "[the film artist] is offered particularly vivid and impressive effects."[40] The question of lacking sound is like that of color. Gestures, as a means of visual expressions, are seen more effective and expressive than if the sound is actually heard. Arnheim states: "If one does not hear what is said, the meaning becomes indirectly clear and is artistically interpreted by muscles of the face, of the limbs, of the body."[41] For him, all the above-mentioned techniques are intentionally used by the film artist to

[35] Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi, eds. *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 10.
[36] Arnheim, *Film as Art*, p.127.
[37] Ibid., p. 66.
[38] Ibid., p. 9.
[39] Ibid., p. 87.
[40] Ibid., p. 65.
[41] Ibid., p. 109.

communicate specific signification. He clearly states that "things which have no significance have no place in a work of art."[42] The Egyptian filmmaker and theorist, Tewfik Saleh, also affirms that "[t]he image in cinema is not flat, but dense with significances. The mastery of the director lies in orienting the spectator toward a proper interpretation of the film and a reading of its inner structure."[43] In this sense, Arnheim's theoretical approach to film helps us engage in close analysis of the significations of cinematic elements that make film an art, a representation rather than a presentation.

It is worth mentioning that the main working principle of film art, for Arnheim, lies in its capacity to communicate thoughts about its subject. However, he relatively imprisons such artistic capacity of cinema within the circle of divergences between the filmic representation and the reality filmed, which he generally attributes to the limitations of the medium.[44] So, he considers the sound film artistically inferior to the silent one because he assumes that the more the film is closer to reality, the more it loses its artistic quality. From Arnheim's point of view, the evolution of cinematic technologies represented in the introduction of color and sound is considered to be more reduction than evolution of the artistic status of cinema.

The famous philosopher, Berys Gaut, profoundly supports Arnheim's defense of cinema as art. However, he differs from him with regard to the features that enable cinema to convey thoughts about the world; to be an expressive medium. Unlike Arnhiem who attributes the artistic effect of cinema to the limitations of the medium by which filmed image deviates from reality, Gaut sees that artistic feature emerges from the capacities of medium to record realities in different ways. He writes: "It is by the virtue not of the limitations of the medium, but by the virtue of the medium's capacities to record reality in different ways that film can possess expressive properties, can communicate thoughts" [45] In so doing, Gaut refutes the challenge that sees cinema as a mechanical reproduction of reality and Arnheim's position that restrict the artistry of cinema to silent film. He proves that the artistic possibilities are greater in the case of digital cinema than that of traditional one, because "digital cinema need not be photographic at

[42] Ibid., p. 50.

[43] Tewfik Saleh, "Remarks on Reception Aesthetics in Arab Cinema," Abstract, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995, p. 277-278, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521694 (Accessed 19/04/2016).

[44] See Arnheim, *Film as Art*, p.75.

[45] Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, p. 41.

all (images can be and sometimes are entirely hand drawn using image editing software)."[46]This means that digital cinema provides filmmaker with a greater range of ways by which he/she can manipulate the cinematic images like changing the colors and shapes and the addition of sound effects and voice-over narration. Apart from whether the film is far or close from reality, the artistic, and thereby representational, capabilities of film emerges from being woven in a way that fits with the vision the director intends to convey as well as with the aesthetic preferences of the spectator for whom the film is made.

In his article "Photography and Representation," Roger Scruton sees representation as a fundamental marker of art. He conceptualizes representation in terms of the artist's capacity to communicate thoughts about a subject. He writes: "It is precisely when we have the communication of thoughts about a subject that the concept of representation becomes applicable; and therefore literature and painting are representational in the same sense."[47]On this account, he excludes cinema from the arena of art, because he argues that "a film is a photograph of a dramatic representation.[48]

Scruton's skeptical challenge is also grounded on an analogy between painting and photography. For him, painting stands in intentional relation to its subject in the sense that thoughts are communicated by the painter regardless of whether the subject of painting is exist or not. Unlike painting, photography, and thereby cinema, stands in causal relation to its subject. The causal relation requires the existence of the subject of a photograph and the resemblance of its appearance.[49] Thus, he sees that photography does not pave the space for photographer to express his/her thoughts, because it lacks the possibilities of "aesthetic transformation," to use Scruton's terminology.

In Scruton's analogous sense, the interest in painting is "in the representation for its own sake." [50] By contrast, the interest in photography derives from the appearance and features of its subject. "If the photograph is interesting," Scruton contends, "it is only because what it portrays is interesting and not because of the manner in which the portrayal is effected."[51] He generalizes

[46] Ibid., p. 7.
[47] Scruton, "Photography and Representation," p. 581.
[48] Ibid., p. 577.
[49] Ibid., pp. 577-579.
[50] Ibid., p. 586.
[51] Ibid., p. 593. Scruton is referring here to ideal photography, which he distinguishes from actual photography. For him, the former refers to "a logical fiction, designed merely to capture what is

his argument about the incapacity of photography to be a representational art to cinema on the consideration of being causally generated. As stated before, he defines film as "a photograph of dramatic representation," which at its best "might record the artistry displayed by the actors who performed in front of the camera."[52] This claim lays itself open to refutations that profoundly disprove it and foregrounds the artistic features of cinema.

In addition to his response, along with Arnheim, to the above-mentioned reproduction challenge, Gaut also painstakingly refutes Scruton's challenge to cinema as art. He notes that "even if Scruton is correct about photography's representational incapacity, his argument does not generalise to cinema."[53] Cinema has non-photographic techniques by which film director can communicate thoughts about the world. Scruton acknowledges that photography can become a representational art by adopting non-photographic properties, like photomontage, which move it away from the ideal of photography toward the ideal of painting.[54] In Parallel, Gaut affirms that "montage (editing) is one of the central features of cinema…and it certainly cannot be regarded as a non-cinematic technique." [55] Noel Carroll also significantly contends that "[editing] is a means of communication within the social institution of world cinema. It provides a means of articulation whose practice enables filmmakers to convey stories, metaphors and even theories to spectators."[56] Thus, cinema is art by its own non-photographic techniques that brings it closer to painting especially in the case of digital images where "one can manipulate them within graphics editing applications, changing their colors, shapes and so on."[57]

To go beyond the restriction of artistry of cinema to the editing and to account for the artistry of photographic techniques that cinema employ, Gaut strives to prove that photography, the essence of cinema, is also an art. He explains that photography has formal artistic features that significantly make it an art form.

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distinctive in the photographic relation and in our interest in it," while the latter results from photographers' attempt "to pollute the ideal of their craft with the aims and methods of painting." p. 578.

[52] Berys Gaut, "The Philosophy of the Movies: Cinematic Narration," in In *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed., Peter Kivy. Peter Kivy (USA & UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p.230.

[53] Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, p. 25.

[54] Scruton, "Photography and Representation," p. 594.

[55] Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, p. 26.

[56] Noel Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Images*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1996, p. 403.

[57] Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, p. 46

> "Photography […] can convey a similarly rich set of thoughts as painting … through the choice, posing, and dressing of subjects, the adoption of means of lighting and printing, the selection of lenses, the building-up of an artistic *persona* across a multiplicity of photographs, in the light of which we interpret the photographer's individual images, and so on. [58]

Here, Guat refutes the charge that photography cannot be a representational art. He explains that photography can communicate thoughts about its subjects through various photographic techniques, which provides us not only with the visual properties of the referent, but also with interpretation of it; enable us to go beyond what it is seen to the way it is seen. Gaut's argument about the representational capacity of photography is applicable to all the films under study, since the photographic techniques used in these films are almost used to convey specific significations. So, photography, and therefore cinema, is certainly a representational art.

The above debate shows us that the definition of cinema as an art form acquires its status from the employment of the formal elements, be they photographic or cinematic. Such formal elements are artistically used to convey the artist's intentions or communicate some thoughts about a subject. In this respect, cinema can be considered as a mode of expression or a means of visual communication. The vision of cinema as art has also been stressed by Arab intellectuals and film directors who have been influenced by the social realist school. For instance, in his interview about cinema, the internationally known Syrian director, Muhammad Malas, states that "cinema is the most expressive medium for rendering an intended idea."[59] He also firmly writes: "I don't believe there is any other medium that has the multiplicities of modes of communication as the cinema."[60] In this regard, filmmakers express their visions and thoughts through the aesthetically complex juxtaposition of cinematic codes. Yet, the question to be provoked here is: how does such communication function? This question takes us to the socio-political orientation of film art.

[58] Ibid., p. 32.

[59] Muhammad Malas and Marwan Darraj, "Cinema is the Most Expressive Medium," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995, p. 283, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521694 (Accessed 19/04/2016).

[60] Ibid., pp. 283-284.

1.1.4. Cinema as Ideology

The aesthetic dimension appears to be very significant in the definition of cinema. Nevertheless, such aesthetic definition of cinema neglects the idea that films can be ideologically coded and socio-politically oriented because of being produced by social agents who might use them to propagate open or latent ideological messages of the dominant political power. This consideration impels many theorists, like Marxists and feminists to take cinema from the arena of art to the realm of ideology. As it is explained below, Marxists view that cinema has been exploited by capitalists and socio-political elites not only for financial investments, but also for serving the ideological purposes of the dominant groups. Feminists also see that cinema, as cultural mode of production, conforms to the patriarchal ideology that tries to create gender differentiation and reinforce male dominance. Here, it seems significant to briefly discuss how ideology has been defined by some cultural theorists especially Marxists and feminists in order to understand the ground upon which cinema has been seen as ideology.

In their *German ideology*, Karl Marx and Engels define ideology as a system of ideas that serve the interests of the ruling class. They write, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas."[61] They also mention that the domination over the economic structure enables the ruling class to control the means of cultural production. They state:

> The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production subject are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations.[62]

Marx and Engels's understanding of ideology seems to leave little space, if any, for resistance because, in the capitalist system, the dominated group lacks the economic bases that can enable them to produce or disseminate a counter-hegemonic discourse. This means that the cultural modes of production, like cinema and literature, are determined by those who control the

[61] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 67.

[62] Ibid.

economic structure. The best example that can clarify this point is the marked absence of Arab anti-colonial films during the colonial era.[63]

In this vein, the well-known Italian Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci provides a broader definition of ideology. Gramsci views that the ideological mode of production is determined not only by the economic structure as Marx sees, but also by the dominant social relations. Gramsci conceptualizes ideology as a terrain upon which the dominant groups try to maintain their power through a combination of what he calls "civil society" and "political society".[64] That is, the dominant powers attempt to sustain their ideological control through two interrelated levels: consent and coercion; cultural hegemony and state domination. For him, "the more complex is the cultural world," [65] in which the intellectuals operate.

Influenced by Gramsci's perspective of ideology, Louise Althusser also defines ideology as a system of representations by which the dominant groups tries to enforce their control through two interrelated types of apparatuses: "Repressive State Apparatus plus Ideological State Apparatuses."[66] The repressive state apparatus is represented in the repressive network which "comprises, in 'Marxist theory', the government, administration, army, police, courts and prisons."[67] And the ideological state apparatuses are embodied in the ideological institutions or the channels of communication through which the dominant powers try to legitimize and disseminate their ideology. These apparatuses include schools, universities, religious institutions, parliament, presses, media, literature, theater, archives and so forth.[68] Most importantly, Althusser argues that "ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects,"[69] in order to make them accept the role assigned to them by the dominant group. Thus, they can freely accept their subjection. In other words, the mechanism of interpellation "makes individuals 'act all by themselves', without there being any need to post a policeman behind each and every one of

[63] See the following section of this dissertation entitled "Contextualization of Arab Cinema," pp. 41-45.

[64] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: The Electric Book Company, 1999), p. 145.

[65] p. 143.

[66] Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London and New York: Verso, 2014), p. xxiv.

[67] Ibid., p. 75.

[68] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[69] Ibid., p. 265.

them."[70] Viewed in this light, cinema can be defined as a mode of the ideological state apparatuses by which social agents, like film directors, cinema's entrepreneurs and intellectuals attempt to socialize the dominated subjects into accepting the norms of the ruling system.

The ideological orientation of cinematic text can be seen in different kinds of cinemas and film genres. In this regard, Hollywood exemplifies a case in point. In her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey criticizes the patriarchal structure of Hollywood cinema where woman was displayed as sexual object for male desire. She argues:

> According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense.[71]

Mulvey clarifies how Hollywood cinema structures the film narrative in a way that serves the ideological apparatuses of the patriarchal system. The ruling ideology deploys the mainstream cinema to construct spilt between the active male and passive female; it uses it as a tool to subordinate woman to man and help him have an authority over her. As Sara Mills illustrates, "this is a common strategy within sexism whereby women are consigned to a less powerful position, even when they are in fact in an equally powerful position to men."[72]

Reading cinema in relation to the historical and political context within which it has emerged and developed would enhance the perception of cinema as ideology. If we return back to the genesis of the cinematic medium, we find that it was invented in the zenith of colonialism where films were almost governed by the ideologically imperialist orientation. Even the seemingly entertaining films that appear to be remote from politics might have ideological implications represented in securing new avenues for the capitalist investments and in alienating

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[70] Ibid., p.177.

[71] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasure*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), p. 20.

[72] Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 38.

the masses from being involved in daily critical discussion. The ideological orientation of Western literary and filmic texts has been traced by a number of scholars, including Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Jack Shaheen, among others.

The ideological formation has been also an integral part of Arab mainstream cinema. In the Egyptian context, for example, the commercial films have been partly produced and distributed to serve the ideological needs of the regime and partly to gain profit. These ideological needs might be represented in deviating people from the discussion of their everyday problems in order not to resist the status quo and work for social changes. After 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser made use of the social-realist trend of cinema to promote pan-Arab ideology in order "to maintain Egypt's position as a hegemonic regional power."[73] The same would be applied to other Arab contexts, like Morocco and Algeria, where the mainstream filmic texts have been utilized to cement national identity and unity.

What strengthen the argument of cinema as ideology are the issues of funding and censorship. Governmental funding is almost conditioned by the production of films that go in line with the state ideology. This supports Marx' argument, stated above[74], with regard to idea that economic structure controls the means of cultural production. In addition, the majority of cinematic productions have been almost subjected to censorship before being publically screened. This helps confirm the idea that "cinema as an institution performs an ideological function; films as particular cultural productions also have a sometimes manifest, always latent ideological content."[75]

What has been said above offers a strong ground to define cinema as a juxtaposition of art and ideology, as an interplay of aesthetics and politics. As mentioned above, the artistic features help film director to communicate his intentions or thoughts about the world in aesthetic manner full of symbols and significations. They also create an interest in cinema because of being seen as a multiple mode of expression that has representational capacities by both its own internal characteristics and through adaptation. However, some political critics and intellectuals feel compelled to go beyond the artistic capacities of filmmaking in favor of analyzing the

[73] Chiba Yushi, "A Comparative Study on the Pan-Arab Media Strategies: The Cases of Egypt and Saudi Arabia," *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, 5-1&2 (February 2012), p. 50.

[74] See pp. 35-36 in this section.

[75] Philip Green, "Ideology and Ambiguity in Cinema," *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1993, p. 102, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25090406 (Accessed 25 April 2016).

ideological messages embedded in film form and content. Although the perception of cinema as ideology calls our attention to critically read filmic text as an arena of conflict between dominant and subordinate ideologies, it puts more emphasis on the operation of power than the articulation of resistance. This impels us to set the definition of cinema as a combination of art and ideology within the frame of discourse so as to consider how artistic work operates within the complex dialectic of power relation.

1.1.5. Cinema as Discourse

To account for the paramount importance of the temporally and spatially social, political and cultural context within which the filmic art operates, it seems quite urgent to look for a more encompassing definition of cinema that takes into account not only the workings of power, but also the articulations of resistance and agency. In this regard, Michel Foucault's definition of discourse seems to be more useful to explain not only how power functions, but also how it can be challenged and even changed. Foucault contends: "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it."[76] In Hans Bertens' standpoint, "Foucault allows more room for resistance than Althusser."[77] Unlike Althusser who leaves little room for the downtrodden to escape the suffocating embrace of the dominant ideology, Foucault has faith in the political force of discourse not only in the production and circulation of power, but also in undermining it.

The conceptualization of cinema within Foucault's notion of discursive formation paves the ground for analyzing filmic texts within the network of history, politics and ideology. In *The World, the Text and the Critic,* Edward Said distinguishes between Derrida's idea of textuality and Foucault's notion of discourse where he rejects the former and opts for the latter. He comments:

> Derrida is concerned only with reading a text, and that a text is nothing more than what is in it for the reader…for Foucault the text is important because it inhabits an element of

[76] Quoted in Mills, *Discourse,* p. 40.
[77] Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 128.

> power…even though that power is invisible or implied. Derrida's criticism moves us into the text, Foucault's in and out.[78]

This quotation expounds that the aesthetic value and pleasure of the text seem to stem from its implication in the political contexts. For Said, "to read literature outside its political contexts and origins in the name of the aesthetic appreciation produces only false or incomplete readings."[79] From this perspective, one can argue that readings that try to neglect the impact of the context on the literary or filmic text, and vice versa, "turn a blind eye to the vital conjunction between aesthetic and power."[80]

Said, here, uses Michel Foucault's notion of discourse to read the relation between the text and the world, between knowledge and power. He states that "as a systematic discourse, Orientalism is written knowledge, but because of it is in the world and directly about the world, it is more than knowledge: it is power."[81] In a similar vein, postcolonial texts are to be seen as powerful tools of resistance as long as they are devoted to criticizing and questioning colonial and other dominant orthodoxies in order to reconstruct non-coercive alternatives.

In the light of what has been said, cinema is to be conceptualized as a discursive representation characterized by aesthetic creativity and political force. The significations of the film art that are held together by the theme and style cannot be distanced from the struggle over power. Thus, the cinematic discourse can play a double-edged role. On the one hand, it can be manipulated to maintain and legitimize the practices of hegemonic powers. On the other hand, it can be used to dismantle and delegitimize them in favor for establishing an alternative legitimacy, the legitimacy of resistance. To put the matter another way, within the framework of discourse, cinema becomes not merely a site for domination, but more importantly a space for effectuating justice-based alternatives.

The definition of cinema as discourse accounts for the fact that the thoughts and stories evoked in films are produced and determined by social agents and they are necessarily connected to their social and political conflict. This conceptualization helps me position Arab cinema in its

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[78] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 183.

[79] Gauri Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005), p. xvi.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture*, p. 26.

historical, spatial and socio-political contexts and analyze the films under study within the dialectic of power relation; it allows for analyzing the interrelation between Arab films, as cultural products, and the contexts from which they emanate. The relationship between the filmic text and the world can be explored by questioning why Arab films are produced. Are they created to deal with worldly circumstances and transform the world into text? Or are they created only for the sake of entertainment, and should accordingly be read apart from their wider context? The answer to these questions is deeply investigated in the following section through a historically contextual delineation of Arab cinematic productions in the colonial and postcolonial periods.

1.2. Contextualization of Arab Cinema: Arab Cinematic Discourse in the Colonial and Postcolonial Periods

The first section offers historical delineation of cinema in a way that gives paramount importance to the context within which it emerges and develops. Setting out from Edward Said's argument of the inextricable relationship between text and context,[82] this section provides a systematic contextualization of Arab cinema with special focus on the three Arab filmmaking countries under study: Egypt, Morocco and Yemen. It is well known that the Arab World is very heterogeneous not only in terms of being composed of different ethnicities, countries, social structures, political systems and religious orientations, but also in terms of being exposed to different cultural and political transformations. In such heterogeneous context, Arab cinema has been differently influenced by various contextual factors: colonial, political, social, economic, religious and linguistic. Thus, this section approaches Arab cinema as a flux of heterogeneous conglomerate that has distinct specificities and common features as well. That is, it examines the

[82] Said argument of the relationship between the text and context is articulated in his three main interrelated books: *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism*, and *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. In *Orientalism*, said argues that Western textual representation of the non-Western Other can be discussed and analyzed "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." (Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], p.3). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said scrutinizes two main themes: the relationship between Western culture and empire and the connection between postcolonial writings and resistance. (This point is precisely stated by Said in Gauri Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, [London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005], p. 26). *The World, the Text, and the Critic* addresses the relationship "between a discursive and archival textuality and worldly power," and how the text is deeply involved in "circumstance, time, place, and society." (Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 35).

hurdles and transformations that distinguish every cinematic context, as well as the links that bring them together.

1.2.1. Arab Cinematic Sphere during the Colonial Era

It is important to note that colonialism represents a key factor in understanding the background of Arab cinema because, as Guy Hennebelle argues, "[c]inematic production in the Arab world … has been held back by the traumatic effects of colonialism."[83] The cinematic sphere of Arab and African countries were, for the most part, controlled by "a White, colonialist-settler cinema."[84] Although film screenings were held in Egypt and other Arab countries, like Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, just a few months or years after the first public screening in France,[85] "[t]he films that were shown were imported and suited only to the tastes of the colonizers; they excluded the bulk of the local population."[86]

Likewise, the films that were shot in the colonies were also intended for the entertainment of the settler audiences. The native spaces were merely used as backdrops and the native actors, if there any, were only given minor roles. In her study of the films that were shot in the Middle East and North Africa during the early decades of the twentieth century, Ghareeb significantly notes:

> The Middle East and North Africa mainly served as subjects and settings for the film industries of Europe and the United States. None of the films employed Arab actors in any of the lead in roles; Arabs were used only as extras. The films all contained a common thread that presented the colonizers as superior and reduced the natives to background decoration.[87]

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[83] Guy Hennebelle, "Arab Cinema," *MERIP Reports*, no. 52, 1976, p. 4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3010963 (Accessed 19 May 2016).

[84] Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 426.

[85] Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, p. 10.

[86] Shirin Ghareeb, "An overview of Arab cinema," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 6, no. 11, 1997, p. 120, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10669929708720114 (Accessed 11 May 2016).

[87] Ibid.

This passage illustrates not only the Western monopolization over the realm of filmic production, but also the way the colonizer reduced the Arab world to "only an exotic setting for events and plots that are essentially European,"[88] and the indigenous people to pieces of decor. The film *Casablanca* (1942) directed by Michael Curtiz represents a case in point. In this film, Casablanca is projected as an exotic setting for the European. It is seen "peopled by Americans, French, Germans and even Czechs, but where are the Arabs? Apart from a minor villain played by Sidney Greenstreet, there are none."[89]

The misrecognition of the natives and the distorting representations of their culture and space appear to have been common politics of colonialism. Edward Said summarizes the images held about Arabs in Western films and televisions as follows:

> In the films and television the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Slave trader, camel driver, money changer, colorful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema.[90]

Here, Said shows how Western movies and TV are loaded with stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. The Arabic characters are, for him, ideologically stripped of everything positive. His argument has widely resonated among postcolonial theorists. For instance, Ellah Shohat and Robert Stam have found out that "most European features set in North Africa" reduced Arabs to mere "shadowy background figures, picturesquely backward at best and hostile and menacing at worst."[91] In her investigation of the colonial representation of North African people during the colonial era, Viola Shafik has also come up with the idea that "[t]he cinematographic representation of the indigenous population in North Africa functioned in a similar way to Zionist film making."[92] Citing Guy Henebelle and Khemais Khayati, she mentions that "[d]uring

[88] Laurence Michalek, "The Arab in American Cinema: A Century of Otherness," *Cinéaste*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1989, p. 4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23803056 (Accessed 15 May 2016).
[89] Ibid.
[90] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 286-287.
[91] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 252.
[92] Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, p. 18.

the first decades of Zionist film making … Palestinians were pictured above all as barbaric, violent villains, to be met with arms and weapons."[93]

The colonial representations of the indigenous people were accompanied by rigid restrictions over the means of local productions. That is, the production of anti-colonial cinematic discourse and the establishment of local film industries were hindered by the colonial powers. In fact, colonialism imposed its domination not only on territories, but also on the cultural and economic realms. "In the French colonies," Shafik contends that "the hindering of native efforts to produce was part of a general framework of cultural and economic politics."[94] The mechanism of "the oppression of indigenous culture was enforced with the help of legal restrictions."[95] The colonial control over the economic resources of occupied territories had also contributed to the impediments that hindered local investment in cinema because "important areas of the economy were dominated by foreign investors, and native entrepreneurs were hardly able to survive."[96]

However, the strict restrictions imposed on local productions did not equally function everywhere in the Arab World. Some Arab countries like Algeria and Morocco did not produce even a single feature film by native director before independence.[97] By contrast, Egypt was "able to develop a national film industry during the colonial period."[98] In addition to Egypt, there were simple attempts, in some Arab countries, to produce a few locally scattered films. For instance, Tunisia, Syria and Lebanon started producing a couple of silent films by the second decade of the twentieth century.[99] The contextual factor in the cinematic production would be made clear through a comparison of the cinematic scene in Egypt, Morocco and Yemen.

In the context of the Arab world, Egyptian cinema holds a pioneering position. Film historians and critics recognize it as "the oldest and largest film industry in the region."[100]

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[93] Quoted in ibid.
[94] Ibid., p. 15.
[95] Ibid., p. 9.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p. 15.
[98] Ibid., p. 11.
[99] Ghareeb, "An overview of Arab cinema," p. 120; Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, pp. 11-12.
[100] Jane Gaffney, "The Egyptian Cinema: Industry and Art in a Changing Society," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1987, p. 53, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41857918 (Accessed 11 May 2016). See also Mostafa Messnaoui, "History of Arab cinema (introduction to understanding and interpretation)," *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2014, p. 204, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2014.902183 (Accessed 11 May 2016).

Despite the fact that film production was initially held by foreigners and the investment in cinema was first confined to non-native entrepreneurs, Egypt was relatively able to overcome the colonial restrictions and to have "a history of film production well before independence in 1952."[101]

Before 1952 revolution, Egyptian cinema was dominated by conventionally melodramatic and musical film genre for the motive of making profit and with the goal to attract the largest possible audience. The profit-oriented consideration pushed filmmakers "to depend on what was already accepted and popular, namely the song and the musical record."[102] "With the advent of sound," Viola Sahfik states, "the Egyptian film industry started the commercial exploitation of popular Egyptian songs and singers whose music had already spread by radio and record all over the Arab world."[103] Besides, Egyptian film industry included other entertaining genres like farce and melodrama that were mostly interspersed with dance and music in order to increase its commercial success.[104] In so doing, Egyptian films gained popularity and they were shown to and favored by audiences all over the Arab world.

As a result of their popularity, and in spite of not being overtly political, "the colonial powers opposed them because they contributed to a pan-Arab sense of identity. French colonial powers imposed restrictions and heavy taxes specifically on Egyptian films, while the British used censoring regulations."[105] This means that the colonizers perceived them as troublesome in the sense that they helped generate Arab sense of belonging. Consequently, the colonial powers tried to restrict their influence. Such restrictions, however, failed to hinder the boom of Egyptian film production. Shirin Ghareeb indicates that "[b]y the time sound film had arrived in 1932,

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[101] Noha Mellor et al., *Arab Media: Globalization and Emerging Media Industries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 104. Although Britain had recognized Egypt as an independent sovereign State in 1922, Egyptian independence before 1952 was nothing more than a sham. With the outbreak of World War II, Egypt was compelled to accept some half million Allied troops, and the king Faruq had almost no choice but to give in to British pressures. Further, after 1945, Egypt openly supported the Allied forces with the hope of being rewarded a complete independence at the end of the war, but such hope turned into disappointment. The Egyptian masses then engaged in political demonstrations, strikes and guerrillas, calling for total evacuation of British troops from the country, which continued till 1952 revolution. Four years after the revolution, Egypt officially gained its independence. See Selma Botman, *Egypt From Independence To Revolution, 1919-1952* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), pp. 42-55.

[102] Saleh, "Remarks on Reception Aesthetics in Arab Cinema," p. 277, See also Shafik, *Arab Cinema,* p. 24.

[103] Shafik, *Arab Cinema,* p. 24.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Saleh, "Remarks on Reception Aesthetics in Arab Cinema," p. 277.

Egypt had made 13 films," and "by 1945, some 150 Egyptian features had been made."[106] "Between 1945 and 1952 Egyptian production reached an average of 48 films per year, a number comparable to today's production,"[107] Shafik cites Georges Sadoul. In spite of being "unable to propose an effective political response to colonialism,"[108] such films had an aspect of resistance in the sense that they had to be considered as attempts to break Western monopoly over film production.

In the midst of the numerous melodramatic and musical film traditions, the overt discussion concerning national identity and native struggle against colonialism was almost absent.[109] However, this does not necessarily mean that all Egyptian films during the colonial period have been detached from dealing with social issues. "There is," as Shafik states, "some breaking of taboos, and some social inversion, even if their cathartic function is limited."[110] A close reading of a couple of films produced before 1952 shows that they kept, to some extent, an allegorical criticism of social problems in Egypt. For instance, the first Egyptian short fiction film *Barsoum Yabhath 'an Wazifa* (Barsoum looks for a job, 1923) dramatizes the social struggle against poverty and unemployment undertaken by a homeless protagonist named Barsoum who looks for a job. Mistaken as a business man, Barsoum is invited to a lunch by a bank officer. During the lunch, his behavior betrays him, so the bank officer has expelled him to the street where he is persuaded by policemen who takes him into jail.[111] Although the film discusses the issue of unemployment in a very superficial way where we do not see any development of the characters, the mere criticism of the miserable condition of the Egyptian masses during the colonial era implies an implicit condemnation of the colonial project.

In her discussion of the development of the Egyptian cinema during the fortieth of the twentieth century, Amal al-Gamal notes considerable films that deal with social concerns like Kamal Salim's *al-'Azima* (Destination, 1939) and *al-Muzahara* (Demonstration, 1941), which tackles the problem of unemployment among intellectuals and the conflict between employees and employers respectively, Salah Abu Saif's *al-Suq al-Sawda* (The Black Market, 1943), which

[106] Ghareeb, "An overview of Arab cinema," p. 120.
[107] Quoted in Shafik, *Arab Cinema,* p. 12.
[108] Hennebelle, "Arab Cinema," p. 4.
[109] Qussai Samak, "The Arab Cinema and the National Question: From the Trivial to the Sacrosanct," *Cinéaste*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Spring 1979), p. 32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41685910
[110] Shafik, *Arab Cinema,* p. 77.
[111] Mohamed Bayoumi, dir., *Barsoum Yabhath 'an Wazifa* (Barsoum looks for a job), Amon Films in Cairo, 1923.

explores the internal structure of capitalistic system, and Ahmed Mursi's *al-'Amil* (the Employee, 1943) in which the employees are shown struggling for their rights, exercising strike, and managing the factory at the end.[112] The open or allegorical criticism of social ills within the colonial context implies a latent criticism of the colonizer.

The aforementioned discussion emphasizes that Egypt has established a pioneering Arab film industry in the pre-independent era. The prominent Moroccan film director Moumen Smihi expresses that "the world of Egyptian cinema was the Arab world that was mine, certainly by language, by clothing, by architecture, by psychology, by the structure of the family."[113] Here, Smihi clarifies the popularity that Egyptian cinema has gained across Arab-speaking countries. Since the term Arab cinema is used, here, as an umbrella that includes multiple cinemas or, to talk accurately, films made by filmmakers from different Arab countries, it would be interesting to compare the cinematic sphere of Egypt to that of other Arab countries like Morocco and Yemen.

Comparing Egyptian cinema to Moroccan and Yemeni ones before independence would be unthinkable because Egypt was nearly the only Arab country that established national film industry during the colonial period by which the natives directed several films, among them feature ones. Although the movie theaters were established in Morocco during the French occupation, no single feature film was shot by a native director before independence in 1956.[114] French colonialism has had multi-faceted effects on Moroccan culture, among them films. One effect of colonialism is manifest in the films that the colonizers shot and directed in the colonies. These films, as mentioned above, were saturated with stereotypical images about the indigenous people. The French films shot in the Maghreb, like *Mektoub* (1919), *Allah's Blood* and *In the Shadow of the Harem* (1928), as Viola Shafik explains, "used the Maghreb as an exotic backdrop full of palm trees, camels, and belly dancers."[115] After 1945, the colonial authorities "started, together with the French army to use cinema as a means of propaganda. For this reason, they

[112] Al-Ariss et al., *Al-Sinima' al-'Arabiyya*, pp. 280-281.

[113] Quoted in Peter Limbrick, *Arab Modernism as World Cinema: The Films of Moumen Smihi* (California: University of California Press, 2020), p. 19.

[114] Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, p. 15. For more elaboration, you can see the same source, pp. 12-15. Note: I modified the date of independence from 1954, as it is written by Shafik, to 1956 since it is the annually celebrated date and the most referenced in the books.

[115] Ibid., p. 16.

established in Morocco the CCM (centre cinématographique Marocain)."[116] This means that the cinematic discourse, before independence, was shaped by the colonizers in a way that serves their imperial agendas and appeals to their ideological imagination.

By contrast, the cinema scene of Yemen differs from other Arab filmmaking countries like Egypt and Morocco. In Yemen, there is little interest in cinema, both from the state and from the private sector. In her article "Cinema of Yemen and Saudi Arabia," Anne Ciecko mentions that "the countries of the Arabian Peninsula … have been grossly misrepresented through Hollywood stereotypes, and lacking in locally produced feature film representations."[117] So, this drives us to investigate the historical challenges that impeded and still impedes the cinematic development in Yemen.

During the period of the inception of cinematic medium, the southern part of Yemen was under the control of British colonialism and parts of the North were under the Ottoman rule. Because cinema is influenced by different contextual factors, the cinematic scene in North Yemen differed from that in the South. Despite the fact that the movie theatres were increasingly established in Istanbul from 1908 onwards,[118] there was no single movie theatre established in North Yemen during the Ottoman rule that ended in 1919. This might refer to the instable and transient control of the Ottoman Empire. That is, the militantly indigenous resistance might drive the Ottomans to focus on "the organization of military administration to take control and enforce power."[119]

Unlike the cinematic scene in the North in which film screenings were totally absent before 1962, "Aden was the site of one of the earliest movie houses in the Arab world (established in 1918)."[120] Abdulqader Baras mentions that there were many cinematic halls established during British colonialism like "Hurricane," "Regal," "Shalimar," "cinema Balqis" and "Radio". However, such cinematic halls were dedicated to the presentation of Western, Indian and

[116] Ibid.

[117] Anne Ciecko, "Cinema "of" Yemen and Saudi Arabia: Narrative Strategies, Cultural Challenges, Contemporary Features," *Wide Screen*, vol. 3, no.1, June 2011, p. 1, URL: http://widescreenjournal.org (Accessed 19 April 2016).

[118] Murat Akser and Deniz Bayrakdar, eds., *New Cinema, New Media: Reinventing Turkish Cinema* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 191.

[119] Abdulwahhab al-Rawhani, *Al-Yemen Khususiyyat al- Hukm wa-l-Wahda: Dirasa Tahliliyya* (Yemen Specificity of Rule and Unity: Analytical Study) (Amman: Zehran Publishing, 2009), p. 117.

[120] Ciecko, "Cinema "of" Yemen and Saudi Arabia," p. 4.

Egyptian films.[121] In this regard, Anne Ciecko also mentions that Aden was described as "the center of Arabic film importation" in the Arabian Peninsula.[122] This sets it apart from conservative North Yemen in terms of the boom of film screenings. Like Morocco and Algeria in the pre-independence era, South Yemen witnessed only, during the whole period of British colonialism, film exhibition, while the locally produced films seem to be totally absent. The lacking of locally produced films has continued in the South Yemen after the post-independence era. A decade later after the unification with the northern part in 1990, Yemen witnessed the first film production. The reasons behind that are contextualized in the discussion of the Arab cinematic productions after independence.

1.2.2. Arab Cinematic Trajectory in the Postcolonial Period

After independence, Arab filmmaking has generally witnessed a rapid and profound shift. The post-colonial context has really paved the space for the establishment of national cinemas by which Arab filmmakers have got possibilities to represent themselves and their culture. This is manifest in the films produced few years after independence that dealt with colonial atrocities, the struggle against colonialism, and the promotion of national identity as it is illustrated below in the cases of Egypt and Morocco.

Despite the fact that the advocacy of national questions plays an important role in laying bare the real face of colonialism and in resisting its policies of 'divide and rule,' they have embodied narrowness and regionalism. National films have not recognized the role of the marginalized and migrant's exile in the process of liberation and highlight only the role of national elites. So, film theorists, and thereby filmmakers, have tried to go beyond national consciousness to that of social consciousness in order to bring the marginalized voices to the fore and acknowledge their contribution not only to anti-colonial resistance, but also to social reform as a whole. This is illustrated, below, through the discussion of the development that Arab cinema has been undergoing.

It is nevertheless noteworthy that the development of Arab cinema has not taken a linear trajectory and has not even proceeded in the same way everywhere in the Arab world. Besides

[121] Abdulqader Baras, "Taqrir Musawwir: al-Sinima Zaman fi Aden" (Photographer's Report: Old Cinema in Aden), *Sahifat Aden al-Ghad,* 5 November, 2013.

[122] Quoted in Ciecko, "Cinema "of" Yemen and Saudi Arabia," p. 4.

the above-mentioned multi-faceted impact of colonialism, film production in the Arab filmmaking countries has been influenced by a variety of economic, political, social and religious factors. For instance, the economic blockade of Iraq and its invasion, and the war in Algeria and Lebanon have retarded the productions of films in these countries.[123] The social and religious suspicion toward cinema has also held back the emergence and development of filmmaking in countries like Yemen and Saudi Arabia. This requires a vision that takes diversity and differences into account. To do so, the contextualization of Arab cinema has to be based on a discussion of each Arab cinematic context separately, and then looking for links among them. So, the following pages try to provide a comprehensive contextualization of the postcolonial cinematic discourse in the three Arab film-producing countries under study: Egypt, Morocco and Yemen.

Within the Egyptian context, the 1952 "revolution" represented a significant period in the evolution of the national cinema in Egypt. The emergence of the socialist regime established by Nasser in 1952 was accompanied by the socio-political orientation of cinema. In her investigation of the consequences of 1952 revolution on Egyptian film industry, Ella Schochat states that "it is clear that the development of a self-conscious national film industry can be traced to the Free Officers Movement revolution of 1952."[124] Qussai Samak provides two examples of films that discussed national question through the exploration of the reasons behind the defeat of the Egyptian army in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. The films are Niazi Mustafa's *Ard-ul-Abtal* (Land of the Heroes, 1953), and Ahmed Badrakhan's *Allah Ma'ana* (God Is on Our Side, 1955).[125] This means that the development of Egyptian cinema has really been informed by social, political, and cultural transformations.

After Nasser's revolution, Egyptian cinema started to effectively integrate realist matrix in order to portray everyday life of Egyptian society. In this respect, Malek Khouri points out that "Egyptian cinema was loosely applying amalgamation of "realist" cinematic trends including French poetic realism, Italian neo-realism and socialist realism," along with "maintaining the

[123] Garay Menicucci, "Europe and the Political Economy of Arab Cinema," *Middle East Report*, no. 235, 2005, p. 46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30042449>. See also Muhammad Shukri Jamil, "An Artistic Trajectory in Cinema," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, (1995), p. 282, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521694 (Accessed 19 April 2016).

[124] Ella Schochat, "Egypt: Cinema and Revolution," *Critical Arts*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 22, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02560048308537565

[125] Samak, "The Arab Cinema and the National Question," p. 32.

classical Hollywood structural paradigm."[126] Shafik describes the retreat of the adaptation of Hollywood style in favor of social-realist tendencies. In her description of the development that Egyptian cinema has undergone from 1950s to 1980s, she summarizes:

> The adaptation of successful Hollywood productions was quite common and during the 1950s and 1960s the spectrum widened as new genres like the police film and melodramatic realism made their appearance. During the 1970s and 1980s the latter developed to become 'social drama,' a kind of action film with a tendency to social critique. In the same period, characteristics of the Asian karate film were adopted by some directors while the old genres like farce, melodrama, and musical increasingly retreated.[127]

The transition from traditional commercial genre to the social realist tendency appears to have registered its increase in Egyptian film industry after Nasser's revolution.[128] However, the transition from one mode to another is not to be understood as a clear-cut. As the melodramatic genre can be sometimes interspersed with social criticism, the socio-political films can also be intermixed with melodramatic flavor. A part from the issue of hybridity in which the appearance of one trend does not necessarily means the exclusion of the other, this quotation, though it significantly summarizes the shifts that Egyptian cinema has undergone, does not discuss the circumstances during which such development has taken place.

It is worth noting that the Anglo-French-Israeli coalition against Egypt in 1956 and the defeat of Egypt in 1967 Six Day War have really impelled filmmakers to shift from the mainstream commercial conventions toward implementing postcolonial vision. The discussion of the anti-colonial struggle, after 1956, was powerfully raised and extended beyond the border of Egypt to embrace the native resistance abroad. For instance, Youssef Chahine directed *Jamila al-*

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[126] Malek Khouri, "Origins and Patterns in the Discourse of New Arab Cinema," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1/2, 2005, pp. 14-15, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41859007>.

[127] Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, p. 24.

[128] For me, films can be described as "realistic" not because they reflect reality, but because they deal with social and political concerns in a way that that is accessible to the cognitive capability of the spectator. Fictional feature films cannot necessarily be devoid of imagination. But, reality and imagination are combined in a way that can be enacted and learned from in the real situations. Thus, reality cannot be understood apart from representation. See Rania Jawad, "Narrating the Past, Confronting the Present," *Jadaliyyah* (March 28, 2011) https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23846

Jazaeriya (Jamila the Algerian, 1958) about the Algerian anti-colonial resistance and *Salah al-Din* (Saladin, 1963) about resistance against the Crusades led by the medieval Kurdish-Arab ruler of Egypt.[129]

Also, the 1967 defeat of the Arab armies has helped awaken consciousness and made filmmakers realize their responsibilities as artists and go beyond the promotion of nationalistic slogans or positive attributes. In his article entitled "New Realism in Arab Cinema," Nouri Bouzid talks about the role of 1967 defeat, along with the other historical and circumstantial crisis in the Arab world that has been continually bleeding, in awakening Arab consciousness from its long slumber and in the emergence of new-realistic trend.[130] This echoes what Chahine says that "the filmmaker working after 1967 is almost a different person."[131] To put it another way, the defeat has led to the emergence of a new film discourse based on self-criticism.

Setting out from this background, Stefanie Van de Peer situates Egyptian cinema produced after 1967 at the crossroad between Third Cinema[132] and New Arab Cinema established by the 1968 Arab New Cinema Collective. The collective issued a manifesto that stresses "the authenticity of film and its closeness to the social and political reality of a society."[133] In a quite similar vein, Sabrina Joseph positions the Egyptian cinema from the fiftieth till the eightieth within the realistic framework. She says that "the period between the 1950s and the 1980s … marked the rise and development of both realism and neorealism in Egyptian film."[134]These tendencies are characterized by getting out from the studio system and offering a new perspective on the everyday life problems.

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[129] For the discussion of these two films, see Maureen Kiernan, "Cultural Hegemony and National Film Language: Youssef Chahine," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995, pp. 130-152, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521683 (Accessed 18/04/2016).

[130] Nouri Bouzid, "New Realism in Arab Cinema: The Defeat-Conscious Cinema," trans. Shereen el-Ezabi, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995, pp. 242-243, http://www.jstor.org/stable/521690 (Accessed 06 May 2016). See also Al-Ariss et al., *Al-Sinima al-Arabiyya*, p. 289.

[131] Quoted in Kiernan, "Cultural Hegemony and National Film Language," p. 140.

[132] The idea of Third Cinema is illustrated below in the discussion of Moroccan cinema.

[133] Stefanie Van de Peer, "Selma Baccar's "Fatma" 1975: at the crossroads between Third Cinema and New Arab Cinema," *French Forum*, vol. 35, no. 2/3 (Spring/Fall 2010), p. 19, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41306660 (Accessed 25/04/2016).

[134] Sabrina Joseph, "Representations of Private/Public Domains: The Feminine Ideal and Modernist Agendas in Egyptian Film, Mid–1950s–1980s," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2009, p. 72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40388731>.

By 1980s onwards, the trend of realism has been more elevated and revised. In this regard, Riad Qasim points out two critical tendencies that distinguished the period of 1980s: critical realism from which Salah Abu Saif came and self-criticism in which the production is based on the director's poetic and intimate works.[135] This evolution has been manifest in the films that "investigate dictatorship and underdevelopment not only in the highly authoritarian structure of the state, but also in the social and familial structure."[136] The film *Oyun la Tanam* (Sleepless Eyes, 1981), by Raafat El Mihi, represents a case in point. The film narrates the story of four brothers working in the car-repair workshop. The three younger brothers are seen coarsely dominated and exploited by their eldest one. So, two of them leave the work and emigrate, while the youngest resorts to the act of violence. He is seen killing his eldest, at the end of the film, in order to put an end for his oppression and exploitation.[137] The familial struggle in the film symbolizes the struggle within the society as a whole in which co-existence can only be achieved through the recognition of individual's right and culture.

The trend of critical realism is shown through a subversion of the essentialist perception of national identity as it unfolds in the film *Al-Bari'* (Innocent, 1986), by Atef al-Tayeb. The film dramatizes the pitfall of nationalism and calls for shift towards social consciousness through portraying the development of the protagonist who joins the army. At the beginning of the film, he is seen blindly allying with the oppressive soldiers against prisoners whom he perceives as criminals and enemies of the nation. In one scene, he is shown killing one of the detainees who tries to flee from the prison. At the end of the film, the protagonist is seen setting the fire against his superior soldiers when he reveals that he has been deceived by the nationalistic slogans and realizes that all his aggressive acts upon the detainees is built on lie.[138]The self-critical tendency is best manifest in Chahine's autobiographical films, among them his film under analysis *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004).

Within the frame of critical tendency, the Egyptian cinema has become more revolutionized by various filmmakers who devote much space to reinvestigating historical, social, political, and gender problems from the point of view of the marginalized or migrant's exile. Moreover, criticism of essentialism has been widely and increasingly articulated especially

[135] Al-Ariss et al., *Al-Cinema al-Arabiyya,* p. 17.
[136] Ibid., p. 190.
[137] Raafat El Mihi, dir., *Oyun la Tanam* (Sleepless Eyes), Cairo: Studio al-Ahram, 1981.
[138] Atef al-Tayeb, dir., *al-Bari'* (The Innocent), Cairo: Aflam Fidiyu, 1986.

in the films produced after 2000s. Many films map the conflict between tradition and modernity in a way that does not give priority of one upon the other, but acknowledges their interaction in the construction of identity. In so doing, contemporary Egyptian cinema seems to resist the articulation of essentialist accounts or authoritarian perception of history. Thus, I argue that the resistance articulated in contemporary Arab cinematic discourse seeks to create the culture of recognition. In the contemporary Arab films under study, resistance is enunciated in ways that recognize and highlight the role of the marginalized voices in the struggle against neocolonialism, ethnocentrism, injustice and corruption as well as class, gender, regional, racial and sectarian distinctions. This means that many contemporary film directors, including Egyptians, Moroccans and Yemenis, have become more interested in articulating "the hidden or suppressed accounts of numerous groups—women, minorities, disadvantaged, or disposed groups, refugees, exiles, etc."[139]

It is no doubt that Egyptian cinema has the longest trajectory in the Arab world. This trajectory has been distinguished with different colors, directions, experiences and shifts from one tendency or generation to another. So, comparing such complicated trajectory to other Arab filmmaking practices would be more interesting. This would enable us to spot the differences and similarities, the specificities and the links that can bring these diverse works together. The above discussion provides a relatively comprehensive image of Egyptian cinema and the following pages try to remap Moroccan cinema, and then Yemeni filmmaking attempts, in a way that makes it easier for us to draw a comparison between them.

Despite the fact that Moroccan cinema has a relatively long history that dates back to the sixtieth, it differs from the Egyptian one in many respects. The boom of Egyptian cinema has depended on the private and public sector, whereas the boom of Moroccan cinema "appears to be totally dependent on the support of the state, which means that it could be halted at any time."[140] Moreover, in Egypt, "the introduction of the public sector was based on a socialism dictated from above, while in Morocco, filmmakers and critics demanded state intervention."[141] Moroccan cinema suffers also from the problem of distribution among the Arab masses in comparison to the Egyptian one. In this respect, Sabry Hafez admits that "unlike the Egyptian

[139] Edward Said, "Forward," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. vi.

[140] Messnaoui, "History of Arab cinema," p. 204.

[141] Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, p. 20.

cinema which dominates the Arab film market, cinema in the countries of the Maghrib suffers from a lack of wide distribution outside its country of origin."[142] That is, unlike Moroccan cinema that has almost faced obstacles to be distributed outside its border, Egyptian cinema has been able to overcome the barriers of language and, consequently, find a way to be distributed all over the Arab world. Besides the hurdle of Moroccan accent, Mostafa Messnaoui adds, in the notes, that "[t]he reason always lies in the distribution structures based on reception, without exportation, and inheritances from French colonialism."[143] This might also refer to the commercial tendency upon which Egyptian cinema was established.

Definitely, Egyptian cinema surpasses not only Moroccan cinema, but also all Arab cinemas in terms of production and reception. However, this does not necessarily mean that Moroccan cinema cannot compete with the Egyptian one at the thematic and methodological level. Unlike Egyptian cinema which has been dominated by the commercial paradigm, Moroccan cinema, from its beginning, has been "akin to the non-commercial, realistic and art films rather than to the main stream Egyptian cinema, yet are deprived of a large audience and wide distribution in the Arab market."[144]

During the early days of national independence, Moroccan cinema, like its Egyptian counterpart, was utilized as a tool to promote national identity and unity. In this regard, it is important to see how Valerie Orlando contextualizes the development of Moroccan cinema in relation to the politics of post-independence era. In the early decades after independence, France's notion of national cinema as "a socialized institution, funded almost entirely by investments from the state"[145] continued to influence the national cinema industry in decolonized Morocco.

Adopting the subsidy model, king Mohammed V used Morocco's national cinema to "contribute to national consciousness and national awareness [by offering means] to construct a nation from population accustomed to thinking only of tribal and regional loyalties."[146] He tried to make use of film for the sake of unifying different tribes and ethnicities like Berbers, Arabs,

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[142] Sabry Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995, p. 40, https://doi.org/10.2307/521681 (Accessed 19 April 2016).

[143] Messnaoui, "History of Arab cinema," p. 206.

[144] Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema," p. 41.

[145] Valérie K. Orlando, *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), p. 19.

[146] Quoted in ibid, p. 8.

Muslims and Jews under the umbrella of the national Moroccan identity. This orientation is quite similar to that initiated by Nasser's socialist system after 1952. This can be read as a kind of resistance in the sense that Egyptian and Moroccan cinemas appropriated the colonial models of national cinema and rearticulated it in subversive ways to the colonial policy (divide and rule) that were predominant during the colonial period. As Egyptian post-independent cinema was used to cement national and pan-Arab identity, Moroccan cinema was also used as a valuable tool to bridge the gap and division that the colonizers had created among ethnic and religious groups.

However, the discursive promotion of pan-Arab nationalism had its own pitfalls, because it pushed Egypt to militarily intervene in the internal affairs of independent states like that of Yemen. Moreover, it replicated the colonial politics of exclusion by privileging the national elites while reducing the minority groups into the margin. Likewise, the promotion of Moroccan nationalism had its own limitations, since it did not recognize "calls for ethnic rights and claims to cultural, ethnic, or religious specificity for Berbers and other groups living in Morocco."[147] Therefore, democracy and freedom could not be achieved in the name of promoting national sense of identity because the opposition voices might be accused of betrayal and then coarsely silenced.

By the 1980s onwards, the question of national identity has therefore started to be problematized in relation to the conflict between "fantasy and reality, past illusions and present hardship," as it is exemplified by film *Mirage* (al-Sarab, 1980) by Ahmad al-Bu'nani and *The Long Journey* (Ibn al-Sabil, 1981) by Muhammad A. al-Tazi.[148] Furthermore, influenced by the Third Cinema movement,[149] Moroccan makers have become socially aware of "the power of film as a social-realist tool to encourage change in society,"[150] and give voice to the masses. Thus, they were encouraged to use a new version of cinema that challenges the conventions of their society and dares advocating social problems like human right abuses, incarceration, poverty,

[147] Ibid, p. 21.

[148] Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema, p. 44.

[149] Third cinema is defined as "an aesthetic and political project which is guided by certain principles in order to challenge power structures." (Kim Dodge, "Third (World) Cinema," http://thirdcinema.blueskylimit.com/thirdcinema.html

[150] Orlando, *Screening Morocco*, p. 9.

and corruption. Nonetheless, such political themes "were only metaphorically or symbolically rendered until the end of the 1990s."[151]

By "the end of the 1990s . . . [Moroccan] filmmakers embraced an auteur independent style,"[152] whereby film directors generally adhere more to the Third Cinema genre.[153] This genre aims to question and challenge the unjust power structure, both colonial and postcolonial, and seeks for the liberation of the oppressed whether this oppression is expressed in terms of gender, class, race, religion and ethnicity.[154] In this respect, Orlando situates Moroccan films, produced from 1990s till now, within the Third Cinema framework in the sense that they use social-realist style rather than "sensationalism or romanticism"[155] in order to challenge colonial and neocolonial paradigms and "responds to new forms of cultural oppression."[156] As Orlando states, "Third Cinema genre . . . seeks to reveal the hidden struggles of women, impoverished classes, minority groups and others who generally cannot speak for themselves or are not given voice by dominant power structures."[157]

Despite having considerable affinities with the Egyptian cinema in terms of the socio-political direction as well as in terms of the salient features of the film's language—as it will be manifest in the analytical part—Moroccan cinema is mainly coupled by linguistic duality. In the debate of language choice, Orlando emphasizes that "the predominance of the French language in certain sectors of the Moroccan population must be taken into consideration when discussing cinematic production in the country."[158] Although funding does matter in dictating the language the filmmaker uses to make a film,[159] the question of language choice seems to be more ambivalent. Filmmakers might make use of heteroglossic voices to transcend the barriers of culture and language. They might also use French language as tactics to either communicate specific messages or to satisfy the demands of funding sources. Orlando proposes that "a filmmaker's decision of whether or not to use French depends on whom she or he wants to

[151] Ibid., p. 31.
[152] Ibid., p. 32.
[153] Ibid., 33-36.
[154] See Dodge, "Third (World) Cinema." For further information about third cinema, you can also see Sandra Gayle Carter, "Moroccan Cinema: What Moroccan Cinema?" PhD Diss., Unpublished (The University of Texas at Austin, 1999), pp. 55-58.
[155] Dodge, "Third (World) Cinema."
[156] Ibid.
[157] Orlando, *Screening Morocco,* pp. 30-31.
[158] Ibid., p. xii.
[159] ibid, p. xiii.

influence and what message to be communicated through a particular film."[160] She provides an example of Nabyl Lahlou's *Tabite or not Tabite* in which the exiled protagonists use the French language to describe the despotic past of Morocco and they use Arabic once they return to Morocco to confront their oppressors and challenge the status quo.[161]

A part from the political use of language, films in both French and Arabic seem thematically subversive to the socio-cultural and political restrictions. Perceived in this way, Moroccan films are likely made to "give voice to those who have never had one in Morocco's past."[162] In her positioning of Moroccan cinema, Orlando seems to be influenced by Manthia Diawara's suggestion, seeing films as social-realist narratives that aim at "thematizing current socio-cultural issues."[163] She contends that the films discussed in her book operate within the social-realist style since they are concerned with articulating various voices of the oppressed. In the social-realist films, as Diawara suggests, "the real heroes of social transformations in their country are women, children, and other marginalized groups that have been pushed to the shadows by the elites of tradition and modernity."[164]

From the above discussion, the links between Egyptian and Moroccan cinema in the postcolonial period seem to be relatively clear. In both cases, the postcolonial context marks a turning point in the evolution of national cinematic discourse where the questions of decolonization and national identity have been powerfully articulated. Despite the time precedence of Egyptian cinema over its Moroccan counterpart, both of them have undergone significant developments within the social and critical realist tendencies that are characterized by getting out to the street and picturing the everyday life of men, women and children as detailed above. Implementing postcolonial vision, filmmakers, for example, have dealt with national issues not simply from the point of view of the elites, but more importantly from the individual's eyes. That is, the non-mainstream films produced after 1967 in Egypt and after 1980s and 1990s in Morocco give a sense that filmmakers have become aware of the necessity to turn national consciousness to that of social consciousness in order to recognize the potential roles of the

[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid., p. xvi.
[163] Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 141.
[164] Ibid.

marginalized and suppressed voices both in the liberation struggle and in the process of social reforms.

In the contemporary period extended from 2000 onwards, it is shown above that filmmakers have elevated more critical and resistant tendencies, by which they have challenged the unjust power structure, be it colonial, neocolonial, national or of any other type. In short, the films in the contemporary period become more concerned with articulating the voices of the oppressed for the sake of paving the way for the culture of recognition. This will be further evidenced in the analytical part, which is devoted to the discussion of some contemporary Arab films. After the contextualization of cinematic discourse in the two seemingly liberating countries, it would be interesting to study cinema in the conservative Yemeni context.

Unlike the cinematic scenes of other Arab countries that have flourished after independence, Yemen has only recently joined the field of film production on the hand of individually sporadic initiatives. "*A New Day in Old Sana'a* is the first feature film from Yemen, a country without a film industry or film school,"[165] Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard write. As Messnaoui hypothesizes, "cinema . . . disappears whenever conservative tendencies prevail."[166] The absence of cinema in Yemen can be partly attributed to the opposition that the prevailing conservative tendencies have expressed towards the cinematic image and partly to the lack of financial support. This goes in line with our emphasis, mentioned in the first section, that cinema is more determined by culture than by technology.

Despite the huge gap between Yemeni filmmaking and other Arab cinematic practices like that of Egypt and Morocco in terms of the economic structure, production, reception and even perception of film culture, the films that have been individually produced in Yemen can thematically and aesthetically compete with their aforementioned Arab counterparts. This suggests that Yemeni directors make use of what have been successfully achieved by their counterparts, be they Arabs or non-Arabs. For instance, Bader Ben Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005) represents the tensions in the struggle for recognition that are dealt with through the conflict between tradition and modernity and first and second generation. It depicts identity as flux and transformational processes that defies being bound by the chains of class or religion.

[165] Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 303.

[166] Messnaoui, "History of Arab cinema," p. 200.

In the light of what has been said, it becomes obvious that, in spite of the specificities that distinguish every Arab cinematic practice, there are some links that bring, at least, a significant portion of Arab films together both thematically and methodologically. The intersection of the thematic aspect can be epitomized in the idea that non-mainstream Arab films, particularly contemporary ones, give much space to the voices that have been marginalized, exiled, distorted, or excluded by colonial, neocolonial, national, patriarchal or any other dominating power. On the methodological level, Arab film directors seem to be almost influenced by the socio-realist approach, which is, for Mike Wayne, central to Third Cinema,[167] as a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not bound by geographical borders.

However, approaching Arab filmic discourse from the perspective of social realism is not unproblematic, because reality is neither easily accessible, nor one-sided. Thus, my concern, here, is with the deconstructive potential of realism, rather than with the reflexive one. That is, the articulation of resistance depends on the production of counter-hegemonic discourse regardless of being read as convergent or divergent from reality. Yet, the question to be posed is: Is realism adequate to analyze the postcolonial discourse of resistance? The answer to this question is going to be thoroughly discussed in the next section through reviewing a number of previous studies that have been done on Arab cinema within the frame of critical realism and beyond in order to pinpoint the extent to which this study differs from the previous ones.

1.3. Studies on Resistance in Arab Cinema

The previous sections give an impression that cinema represents definitely a crucial site for the contestation over power. It demonstrates that the Arab filmic text can never be detached from the context that secretes it, be it expressed in terms of historical, socio-political, cultural, religious, economic, technical or linguistic factors. The interplay between Arab filmic texts and context, between filmic aesthetics and politics, forms a solid ground upon which my argument of the potential of Arab cinematic discourse to pave the way for the culture of recognition is established. As stated before, one can argue that readings that try to neglect the impact of the

[167] Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p. 34.

literary or filmic text on the context and vice versa "turn a blind eye to the vital conjunction between aesthetic and power,"[168] and, to add, between aesthetic and resistance.

It is worth noting, however, that many aspects of Arab cinema have been extensively addressed like the historical development, economic structures, cinematic infrastructures, funding, film production, co-production, distribution, and issues of censorship and spectatorship. Nevertheless, most existing studies on Arab cinema do not pay specific attention to the topic of cultural resistance. So far as I know, there is not any book or study grounded on the analysis of cultural resistance in Arab cinema in a holistic and synthetic way. Equally important, some of the available works appear to approach Arab filmic texts from socio-realist perspective, which cannot go without remarked limitations. Furthermore, some studies seem to be either limited in the scope or so broad that idea of resistance is not sufficiently addressed. The identification of what have been covered by previous researchers helps us to spot the gap that previous studies have left out on the thematic and methodological levels, to see how this study relates to and differs from the previous ones, and then to shape the theories of resistance upon which the analysis of the filmic discourse under study is premised. This section examines as much studies as possible. But, the studies reviewed, here, remain symptomatic examples, because it would be impossible, even pointless, to review all the studies that have been done on Arab cinema.

1.3.1. Film as Social Realist Text: a Mode of Reflection more than Deconstruction

The interplay between Arab filmic text and context has been much examined within the frame of social realist framework either through an employment of evaluative or ethnographic approaches or through using textual analysis of specific films. A critical review of some accounts that have been done on Arab cinema would clarify the reason of why we need to go beyond the tendency of realism to that of representation in order to analyze the disruptive effects instead of measuring the reflective potential of Arab cinema. It is through the discursive formation that filmmakers and, thereby, critics could deconstruct hegemonic discourses and rebuild a plural vision in which the marginalized voices represent the core. My methodology in the review of the previous studies goes from general to particular and from the most pioneering filmic context to the least.

[168] Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture*, p. xvi.

As stated before, some studies seem so broad that idea of resistance is not sufficiently analyzed. In his book *Al-Sinima' wa-l-Mujtama' fi al-Watan al-'Arabi: al-Qamus al-Naqdi li-l-Aflam* (Cinema and Society in the Arab World: Critical Dictionary of films), Ibrahim al-Ariss provides textual analysis of two hundred films ordered alphabetically and chosen to respond to three areas of concern: the relationship between cinema and society, the exploration of the way Arab cinema—represented specifically by these films—has expressed the social development during nearly a century, and how Arab cinema has worked on and contributed to Arab mentalities.[169] Al-Ariss applies social approach to study the dynamic relationship between cinema and society through short analysis of a sample of films chosen to express such relationship. This study seems very significant in terms of showing how Arab films respond to social concerns, including liberating struggle, social justice, gender equality, and the articulation of the marginalized voices. However, it gives us just short synopsis of the films chosen without providing further details or deep analysis. In addition, it perceives cinema as a mirror by which one can scrutinize the process of change in a specific society, rather than as a space of contestation where various ideologies fight with one another, using themes and styles.

The films' discussion of social concerns does not necessarily mean that they reflect reality, because reality cannot be easily accessible and, thus, cannot be apart from representation. Therefore, reading cinema from social-realist approach seems inadequate to analyze the complex dialectics of power relations, particularly if realism is understood as a mere reflection of reality. For example, Aya Mohamed Ateya's "Women Empowerment as Portrayed through the Egyptian Cinema" discusses the question of gender identity in the Egyptian context. She traces the image of women empowerment in Egyptian films produced between 2001 and 2011 and then compares such image to the findings obtained by previous studies. She comes up with the conclusion that women's portrayal has favorably changed.[170] By the same token, Wesley D. Buskirk uses social approach to explore the position of women in Egyptian society through the lens of cinema, arguing that there is a parallel between the image of women in Egyptian films and social

[169] Ibrahim al-Ariss, *Al-Sinima' wa-l-Mujtama' fi al-Watan al-'Arabi: al-Qamus al-Naqdi li-l-Aflam* (Cinema and Society in the Arab World: The Critical Dictionary for the Movies), 1st edition (Beirut: the Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2015), pp. 15-16.

[170] Aya M. Ateya, "Women Empowerment as Portrayed through the Egyptian Cinema: Content Analysis of Films Produced Between 2001-2011," *Journal of Middle East Media*, vol 10, Fall 2014, pp. 78-79, <http://jmem.gsu.edu/files/2014/10/JMEM-2014-ENG-Aya.pdf>.

development.[171] These studies use social realist approach by which cinema is seen as a window to document the transformations that have taken place in Egyptian society, without taking into consideration the ideologically discursive construction of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

By a way of contrast, various aspects of Moroccan cinema have been extensively studied, but few, if any, seem to have analyzed the discourse of resistance in Moroccan filmic texts in its multidimensional and extensive way. Besides, some of the previous studies seem to be more concerned with the reflexive aspect than with the deconstructive one. That is, they approach the transitions of Moroccan socio-political context through the lenses of the literary and filmic texts. However, they acknowledge the potential of literatures and films to promote socio-political awareness and contribute to the process of social reform, because such texts are considered to have come as responses to the experience of oppression shaped by the dominant discourses, be they colonial, national or patriarchal.

One of the most influential books about Moroccan cinema is Kevin Dwyer's *Beyond Casablanca.* Drawing on an interview with M. A. Tazi, Dwyer attempts to contextualize the process of filmmaking, the financial and logistical difficulties facing Moroccan directors as well as Tazi's career and the themes raised in his four feature films. On the one hand, he tries to trace the substantial success and development of Moroccan cinema in relation to the global context.[172] On the other hand, he aims to examine the socio-cultural change and transition Moroccan society is witnessing. Though Dwyer emphasizes that Moroccan cinema is deeply involved in discussing socio-cultural issues, he states that "I am not trying here to provide a study of Morocco at the societal or cultural level or to construct Morocco through the window of film but, inevitably, I move in these directions much of the time."[173] Dwyer is intent to give us a complex vision of Moroccan cinema, since he allows himself and his interviewee much space to move in-between. He admits that "I am not attempting to treat any single aspect comprehensively and I am

[171] Wesley D. Buskirk, "Egyptian Film and Feminism: Egypt's View of Women through Cinema," *Cinesthesia*, vol. 4, no. 2, article 1, 2015. Available at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cine/vol4/iss2/1 (Accessed 5 November 2016).

[172] Sandra Carter precisely summarizes the most significant developments that Moroccan film and fimmakers have undergone as follows: " (a) a shift away from short films being primarily documentary style and toward short fiction films, (b) along with the move to incorporate filmmakers resident abroad into the fold of "Moroccan" filmmakers, and (c) a surge in audience appreciation of several Moroccan feature films" (Sandra Gayle Carter, *What Moroccan cinema?: A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006* [Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009], p. 225).

[173] Kevin Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca: M.A. Tazi and the Adventure of Moroccan Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 17.

privileging the vision and the perspective of one particular Moroccan filmmaker."[174] That is, his study provides a partial and mixed vision oriented by "the two people most directly involved in it as well as the societal contexts (both national and international) within which they move, all of which are full of partiality and mixed purposes."[175]

However, Dwyer's study seems quite different from other studies that engage with Moroccan cinema in the approach and content. While his account uses the ethnographic approach, which mainly depends on a long participant observation field work, to come up with a partial and mixed perspective, other studies, like Orlando's, use the social-realist approach to conduct a discursive analysis of texts. That is, while Dwyer's study focuses on the work of a prominent Moroccan film director and his career, the other studies map the Moroccan texts produced within a specific period of Moroccan history to identify the shifts taking place in the real context.

In her *Francophone Voices of the "New" Morocco in Film and Print*, Valerie Orlando assesses the extent to which "Moroccan Francophone literature, press and film reflect the socio-cultural and political transitions in Morocco since 1999 and King Mohammed VI's coronation."[176] Orlando uses a juxtaposition of historical and social approaches to chart the socio-cultural and political transformations depicted in both film and print. She argues that the more open, democratic climate fostered by King Mohammed VI has enabled Moroccan authors, filmmakers and journalists to touch upon sensitive and taboo issues that were once difficult, if impossible, to discuss in Moroccan society. She brings up to the fore a wide range of politically engaged writings and films that document, for example, issues of poverty, political corruption and exploitation of children, the suppressed memory of the so-called Lead Years, women's struggle for emancipation in a patriarchal society and the question of liberal identity.[177] Although she recognizes that the accounts she invokes in her study criticize and denounce the injustice exercised in the past in order not to be repeated in the present and question the problems of the present in order to help found democratic reforms, Orlando assumes that such accounts "act as

[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.,p. 17.
[176] Orlando, *Francophone Voices of the "New" Morocco in Film and Print*, p. xi.
[177] Ibid., pp. xvi-xvii.

sociocultural and political reflectors of contemporary life."[178] This means that she tries to construct Morocco through the windows of film and print.

Orlando also conducted another study on Moroccan cinema entitled *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society.* Like her above-mentioned study, this study analyzes contemporary Moroccan films within social-realist genre so as to chart the socio-cultural and political transitions that have taken place in Morocco.[179] She assumes that the films produced from 1999 to 2010 "are significantly more critical and candid about Moroccan socio-cultural and political issues than in the past"[180] due to the openness and dynamism of what has come to be known as "Le Nouveue Maroc" (the New Morocco). That is, temporality does matter in the process of representation since Morocco cannot be represented as a stable entity but as a society in transition which is emphatically connected to the dynamic change of the global context.

Like Orlando, Sandra Carter perceives Moroccan cinema to have offered an immediately accessible window into identifying the changing socio-political life of the country. However, Moroccan films, for her, cannot be accounted for without accommodating the complex network in which they are caught in. Thus, unlike Orlando who opts for social realist approach, Carter adopts cultural studies approach in order to help her to encompass

> the ideological, such as influences that political restraints and goals have on content and development; the economic, such as how funding of production, along with economic determinants on acquisition of technology and its use, effect film development and content; and the artistic influences on this medium, such as aesthetics, production techniques, and the interrelationship of film artistry with other cultural arts.[181]

Here, Carter encourages her reader to analyze Moroccan films in relation to the wider social, economic and cultural context within which they operate. A large part of her dissertation is devoted to providing a historiographic analysis of the interrelationship between production, distribution and reception of Moroccan cinema from the political independence till 1996. Her account is really invaluable for those who are interested in reading the filmic text in relation, on

[178] Orlando, *Francophone Voices of the "New" Morocco in Film and Print,* p. xv.
[179] Orlando, *Screening Morocco*, pp. xiii-xiv.
[180] Ibid., pp. xvi-xii.
[181] Carter, "Moroccan Cinema." pp. 4-5.

the one hand, to reception and financial orientation, and to the various film genres and other cultural productions, on the other.

Nevertheless, the assumption that "films are essential in the accurate documentation of past history and present realities"[182]raises the following questions: How can a film director working within the social-realist ideology refute the claim of colonial discourse "to directly represent colonial reality"?[183] And how can the film director communicate his/her vision of resistance if the cinematic medium is perceived to function like a mirror? The defense of the version of the "real" would lead critics to an impasse, because, as Stuart Hall puts it, "realism is always a matter of contest."[184] More importantly, the apparatuses of domination and the cause of the oppressed as well as their complex strategies of resistance have not been adequately answered by social realism. This requires us to go beyond the restrictive model of realism as reflective mode of representation to a deconstructive mode of representation in order to account for the mechanisms of power and the dialectics of resistance.

1.3.2. Film as a Discursive Representation: a Mode of Critique and Resistance

As it is pointed out earlier in the first section, the film director is committed to express his/her complex thought about events and subjects in ways which others are able to understand. It is in the sense of representation or what Ella Shohat and Robert Stam call "progressive realism"[185] that the film director can communicate his/her vision about the cause of the oppressed and their effective modes of resistance in a way that elicits the sympathy of the viewers. That is, conceptualizing cinema as a representational art allows the critical lens of the film director to both deconstruct the dominant historiographies and to reconstruct non-hegemonic alternatives produced from the point of view of the oppressed. The aforementioned subsection shows that the socially critical tendencies of realism do not provide us with deep

[182] Orlando, *Screening Morocco*, p. xiv.

[183] See David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 39.

[184] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1997), p. 360.

[185] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's conceptualization of the function of what they call "progressive realism" seems to go in line with the function of the alternative mode of representation. For them, "Realism as a goal is quite compat[i]ble with a style which is reflexive and deconstructive." They also avoid naïve faith in the reflection of reality, because they perceive reality as always problematic; neither self-evidently given nor easily accessible by the camera. See Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 180.

insight to analyze the complex dynamics of power relations. Thus, it seems significant to identify how Arab and non-Arab researchers and critics engage with new approaches to analyze the themes of resistance in Arab cinema.

I shall acknowledge that the idea of resistance in Arab cinema has been addressed by authors whose works represent landmarks in the postcolonial studies. One of the most remarkable studies is Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* in which they provide conceptual and textual analysis of the operation of Eurocentrism and multiculturalism in literary and cinematic work. Their account is both a critique the Eurocentric paradigm of knowledge, which "permeates and structures *contemporary* practices and representations even after the formal end of colonialism," [186] and a celebration of an anti-Eurocentric alternative. That is, it works on a double front: criticism of hegemony submerged in Eurocentric epistemology and celebration of resistance articulated in the process of what Said calls "writing back". They provide so many examples of how the Third Worldist and minority films "invert the Eurocentric focalizations typical of the western and the imperial adventure film."[187] They have especially highlighted the ways by which anti-colonialist and feminist films have respectively challenged the Eurocentric knowledge and Orientalist fantasies, along with the Islamic fundamentalist view of Muslim women and their spaces.

No doubt, Shohat and Stam's account comprehensively pronounces the defensive position of the Third World cinema in the face of the Eurocentric historicizing. But, it does not elaborate on the Arab cinematic responses to the socio-politically internal problems like political imprisonment, corruption, early marriage and social injustice. Thus, this dissertation tries to account for various forms of resistance stressed in the Arab contemporary cinematic discourse not by completely "grant[ing] ourselves "a cultural studies" -style freedom to wander among diverse disciplines, texts, and discourses, ancient and contemporary, low and high"[188] as Shohat and Stam do, but by limiting the scope of this study to a specific cinematic genre (feature films) and to a mixture of film theory and postcolonial criticism.

In the same way, Lina Khatib's book *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* provides one of the most in-depth theoretical backgrounds for understanding the mechanisms of hegemony and resistance. Her account is

[186] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 251.
[187] Ibid., p. 251.
[188] Ibid., p. 8.

informed by major postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Benedict Anderson, Edward Soja, Stuart Hall, and Homi Bhabha, to name just a few. Khatib deconstructs the essentialist perception of identity with the aim of undoing cultural barriers between the West and the East, explaining how diaspora has blurred the boundaries between them and redefined the questions of belonging. She also reconsiders the concept of displacement in that it does not only apply "to those who are physically or culturally displaced," but also "to those who remain in the same physical or cultural place, who find that their illusion of home has been shattered."[189]

Another example she provides to challenge the East/West divide is the Arab cinematic representation of Islamic fundamentalism. In this regard, she deconstructs the essentialist representation of Islamic fundamentalism as anti-Western ideology through her analysis of the Egyptian films *The Other* and *September 11* in which the Islamic fundamentalists are shown having constant communication and training channels with American imperialism.[190] Besides, the representation of fundamentalists as religious conservatives has been undermined since they are shown to be hypocrites in the context of charity, morality and sexuality as it is manifest through Khatib's analysis of films like *The Other, Birds of Darkness, The Terrorist, The Closed Doors and Rachida.*[191]

Khatib also criticizes the colonial and patriarchal representation of women as powerless and weak and goes further to articulate an alternative vision which shows them as powerful social agents. In her analysis of a couple of Palestinian and Algerian films, Khatib significantly highlights women's resistance and defiance against the Israeli occupation and restrictions as well as against patriarchal practices.[192] In so doing, she recognizes their active participation in the anti-Israeli resistance as well as in the social struggle against oppressive patriarchy.

In a section entitled "On Resistance," Khatib emphasizes "the importance of examining complex social and political issues not addressed in the mainstream," in order to show "how Arab cinemas can be a means of resistance."[193] For her, "the films can be seen as presenting an "oppositional form of 'reading practice'" that confronts dominant ideologies," and "form an alternative way of knowledge production that challenges the dominant narratives of

[189] Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), p. 61.
[190] Ibid., p. 185.
[191] Ibid., pp. 185-186.
[192] Ibid., pp. 91-97.
[193] Ibid., p. 204.

Hollywood."[194] She also takes into consideration the complexity of the notion of resistance in the sense that it cannot be only conceptualized in terms of opposition or reaction. Informed by Homi Bhabha theory of resistance, Khatib states that "the Arab films' resistance is threefold, presented as opposition, but also as subversion and as mimicry . . . both in style and in content." [195] This means that Arab filmmakers would adopt Western style and rearticulate it in a subversive way to challenge the essentialist notions of an East/West dichotomy. Though her study is very valuable on the theoretical level, it seems to provide an inadequate vision of Arab cinema on the practical one, partly because of lacking deep and comprehensive analysis of the chosen films and partly because of being mainly focused on a juxtaposition of Hollywood and Egyptian films and on the idea of unthinking the Eurocentric discourse.

It is worth noting to mention that some studies offer extensive coverage of Arab cinema, but with less, if no, thematic and stylistic analysis of the questions of resistance in the filmic discourse. For instance, in addition to his above-mentioned anthology dealing with the relation between cinema and society, Ibrahim al-Ariss edited another anthology of short studies and articles in which he provides a panoramic picture of Arab cinema.[196] However, the idea of resistance is only hinted at through a contextualization of the emergence and development of alternative modes of Arab cinematic discourse that try to pave the space for the individual voices and their visions. Furthermore, this anthology does not provide us with textual analysis that shows how the mechanisms of power and the dialectics of resistance interact in the filmic discourse.

By the same token, Viola Shafik's *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* provides a comprehensive contextualization of Arab cinema, delineating its emergence and development and exploring the problems of its production and distribution during the colonial and post-colonial eras in relation to Western cinema. Using a combination of intertextual and contextual approaches, Shafik touches on the Arab cinematic involvement in the construction of national

[194] Ibid.

[195] Ibid., p. 205.

[196] This anthology tackles various aspects of Arab cinema such as its presence, history, funding, production and co-production and the evolution of cinematic images across historical periods. Moreover, it deals with the interplay between cinema and previous as well as subsequent texts like literary, musical and media texts, the shift to the cinema of individuals that marks the contemporary Arab cinema, the films' breaking of the triple taboos: religion, woman and politics, and the notion of independent cinema that is produced outside the official cinematic industries and built on the vision of the film director apart from any dictation. See Al-Ariss et al., *Al-Sinima al-Arabiyya*, pp. 5-28.

and cultural identity. That is, she investigates the Arab cinematic connection with the preceding Arab-Muslim cultural arts like music, theater, fine arts, and literature as well as with the historical and political contexts.[197] Though she explains the capacity of the different Arab cinematic genres, especially the socio-realist one, to address the anti-colonial struggle and the socio-political problems of the unprivileged classes, which had been neglected during colonial and official histories, her account neither gives a comprehensive analysis of filmic text nor shows how the strategies of resistance are articulated in Arab filmic discourse. Part of the reason is that she addresses the question of cultural identity in various cinematic genres in relation to other artistic works and in relation to the historical and political events. Unlike Shafik's account, our study is concerned with providing conceptual, theorized and visual-textual analysis of the complex operation of resistance in films chosen according to their relevance to such concern.

Within the Egyptian cinematic context, cinema has been dealt with extensively, but the question of resistance appears not to be dealt with in sufficient and multidimensional way. The existing literature seems to be either limited in the scope or so broad that the idea of resistance is not adequately examined. For example, some studies like "Nationalism and otherness" by Lina Khatib and "Framing Political Islam in Popular Egyptian Cinema" by Ilhem Allagui and Abeer Alnajjar are exclusively devoted to critiquing the essentialist representation of the Islamic movements. The former criticizes the essentialist fundamentalist/nationalist divide and the officially fixed framing of Islamists within the circle of terrorism, corruption and hypocrisy in Egyptian popular feature films.[198] The latter digs deep into the causes of the problem, suggesting that poverty, isolation, marginalization and corruption, among others, represent key factors behind people's affiliation with political Islam and "terrorism".[199]

By contrast, Malek Khouri's *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema* examines Arab national identity from postcolonial perspective. Khouri goes beyond "the deconstruction of the myth of a homogenous Arab national identity" to rebuild "the concept of the Arab nation and Arab national identity as heterogeneous and integral to a long-term

[197] Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, pp. 2-4.

[198] Lina Khatib, "Nationalism and Otherness: The representation of Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Cinema," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 9, issue 1, 2016, pp. 67- 77. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549406060808 (Accessed 18 April 2016).

[199] Ilhem Allagui and Abeer Najjar, "Framing Political Islam in Popular Egyptian Cinema," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 4 (2), 2011, pp. 210-216, https://doi.org/10.1163/187398611X571373 (Accessed 11 May 2016).

modernist project for national self-determination as well as economic, social, and cultural renovation and progress."[200] For Khouri, Chahine's films offer a more encompassing conception of national identity within which various differences are celebrated and integrated. He explores how Chahine's films produced between the 1958 and 2007 have been preoccupied with addressing "social inequalities, colonialism, capitalist globalization, ethnic and religious heterogeneity, non-normative sexuality, the Palestine question [and] the current anxieties associated with the rise of religious fundamentalism . . ."[201] for the aim of fostering social and national liberation. Khouri provides insightful analysis of Chahine's films because he makes use of critical reviews and interviews with Chahine and integrates the content and formal components as they interact with the historical and socio-political context. But, he focuses on the construction of national identity in the work of one film director, Chahine.

What haven been said on Arab and Egyptian cinema can be applied to the Moroccan ones. The afore-mentioned studies show that some researchers interpret Moroccan films in a hermetic hermeneutic framework, while some others approach them from a wide perspective by using cultural studies' style that allows them to move freely between various cinematic genres and art works to come up with intertextual and contextual understanding. In addition to the afore reviewed studies on Moroccan cinema, one other study investigating in some depth man-woman relationship as an essence of social relationship is brought into discussion.

In his article "Al-Jasad fi Aflam Abdelkader Lagtaa bayn Hurqat al-Raghba wa-Qahr al-Inmiha" (The Body between Burning Desire and Force of Confinement in Abdelkader Lagtaa's Films), the Moroccan researcher and critic, Hamid Tbatou, values Lagtaa's film project for providing "an alternative vision to the cinematic creativity and the societal project as a whole . . . He focuses on the Moroccan body in all its relations, desires, restraints, etc."[202] Tbatou appreciates Lagtaa for his desisting of the lexical or literal meaning of body as being "the flesh"

[200] Malek Khouri, *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), p. 4.

[201] Ibid., p. xii.

[202] Hamid Tbatou, "Al-Jasad fi Aflam Abdelkader Lagtaa bayn Hurqat al-Raghba wa-Qahr al-Inmiha" (The Body between Burning Desire and Force of Confinement in Abdelkader Lagtaa's Films), in *Wachma Magazine*, Tetouan, N. 1/2005), pp. 27-28. This article is translated by Mohamed El-Ghazi and me, and it is under publication.

or "the physical part of the living creatures that opposes a spirit as a second part of these creatures."[203]

Tbatou's argument can be epitomized in the idea that the body is constructed "within the rules of societal institutions that force it with restrictions and prohibitions and subjugate it with reward and punishment in order to accept the bases of common social behavior and promote them at different levels of its existence"[204] In other words, the struggle over body represents a struggle within a society since the body is not simply naturally given but also historically, socially, and ideologically constructed. Tbatou, here, reads Lagtaa's films as a mode of resistance to the gendered position of space and authority.

What have been reviewed above point out that the common thread between those who read cinema as a social realist text and those who read it as a discursive representation is their acknowledgment of the potential of the postcolonial Arab cinematic discourse to promote social awareness of oppression and injustice. That is, they profoundly confirm Said's argument saying that film texts are deeply involved in the representation of the historical, political, social and circumstantial struggle. On this account, the description of the text as realistic does not refer to its straightforward reflection of reality, as some of the above-mentioned researchers argue, but to its mode of engagement with socio-political issues in ways that viewers could understand. As Forrest argues, films "can be described as "realistic", not because they accurately reflect a particular political or social reality, but because they encourage viewers to become active participants in the meaning-making process."[205] In this sense, realism cannot be understood as apart from representation.

My reading of Arab cinema as a representation rather than as a social-realist text may raise the problem of representation and the real that is invoked by Robert Young in his *White Mythologies.* Young explains that one of the major problems of Said's *Orientalism* is how representation as fiction can lead to colonization.[206] I bring this idea to the surface because the reader might raise these questions: how feature films as a kind of fiction or a mixture of both fact and faction can articulate the voice and agency of the oppressed? How an alternative fictional

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[203] Ibid., p. 28.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Tara Forrest, *Realism as Protest: Kluge, Schlingensief, Haneke* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2015), p. 8.

[206] See Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 129.

mode of representation can pave the way for culture of recognition? In this vein, Said offers a significant, precise definition of representation that affirms the direct and active relationship between the system of representation and power. He states: "I couldn't help but come to understand representation as a discursive system involving political choices and political force, authority in one form or another."[207] Shohat and Stam also states: "That films are only representations does not prevent them from having real effects in the world."[208]

It is important to mention that this study differs from some of the afore-mentioned studies that have been conducted on Arab cinema in both the approach and the theme. This study does not analyze Arab films within a fixed interpretive framework such as structuralist or social-realist approaches, but rather within the frame of Foucault's discursive representation. Further, while my research does not completely abandon the cultural studies approach that allows one to freely analyze films in relation to other films and art works (intertextuality), I opt more for using postcolonial approach, along with film theory.

On the thematic level, it becomes known that the existing corpus of literature surrounding Arab film studies are either limited in the scope or so broad that the complex notion of resistance in Arab cinema is not adequately analyzed. For example, some studies seem to be preoccupied with reading Arab cinematic discourse in relation to the Eurocentric historicizing; such studies concentrate on the cinema of decolonization or what Said calls "writing back" to imperialism without accommodating other frames of resistance. Other studies are exclusively devoted to either limited themes such as rethinking fundamentalism and women's empowerment or the work of an individual film director. Further, some others provide theoretical or critical insights, with slight reference, if any, to case analysis. By contrast, this study tries to provide a comprehensive analysis of nine films chosen carefully from Egypt, Morocco and Yemen to represent multidimensional aspects of resistance.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided conceptual and theoretical background about cinema in general and Arab cinema in particular in relation to the historical and socio-political context within

[207] Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture*, p. 41.
[208] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 178

which they emerged and developed. It conceptualizes cinema within the frame of discursive representation in which the aesthetics and politics interact not only to sustain and perpetuate the hegemonic power, but also to expose, refute and even change it. More importantly, both Arab and non-Arab researchers and critics, I have come across in the second and third sections of this chapter, discuss the evolution of postcolonial Arab filmic discourse within the social realist framework. In other words, for these researchers and critics, many Arab film directors have used critical realism "to unmask and combat hegemonic representations . . . with a vision of themselves and their reality."[209] Because "reality" is neither unproblematic nor transparent as some might think, it has been problematized and rethought in the light of a discussion of a number of previous studies to come up with a conclusion that realism, besides being contradictory, cannot be understood apart from representation. That is, it is precisely the discursive representation, rather than the committed transparency, that makes cinema an appropriate means of power and resistance.

The third section of this chapter has illustrated that most of the existing studies on Arab cinema are either marred by a methodological hermeneutic pitfall or bound by epistemological limits. Some of the previous studies read filmic texts within a rigid interpretative framework like social realism, leaving little room to any appeal to the notions of complexity, fragmentations, contradictions, and, above all, ideological underpinning of the visions being promoted in films. In a similar but different way, some others fall short of giving a holistic analysis that accounts for film's narrative and film's language as well as of covering different forms of resistance. For this reason, this dissertation has come as an extension or revision of the previous works so as to fill what was conspicuously missing or trespass the seemingly fundamental problems contained in the academic discipline of Arab film studies. Since this dissertation is interested in the analysis of cultural resistance in Arab cinema, it seems necessary to foreground the postcolonial theories of resistance within which the films in question are to be interpreted. This will be dealt with in the following chapter.

[209] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism,* p. 180

CHAPTER 2: Foregrounding Postcolonial Theories of Resistance

Introduction

The notion of resistance represents a core area of concern for postcolonial studies, and it has thus been widely approached by postcolonial theorists and critics. This notion has been conceptualized from a variety of perspectives, including countering colonial violence with emancipatory violence, criticism and denunciation of stereotypical or essentialist representations, writing back to colonialist, Eurocentric and narrowly nationalist and patriarchal discourses, transcending national and even religious consciousness to that of social and human consciousness, rectification of various dominant historiographies, and relocation of culture through the notions of hybridity and transformational identity, to name just a few of the postcolonial multidimensional attitudes of resistance. The diverse perceptions of resistance profoundly prove its flexible and dynamic nature. This is going to be explicated through an extensive discussion of the theories of resistance elaborated by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and subaltern studies' theories. Furthermore, the insight of other postcolonial theorists like Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, Barbra Harlow, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, among others, are brought to view. My theoretical discussion is flavored by examples of the filmic texts under analysis to make links between theory and practice. But, before engaging with the assumptions developed by the above theorists, an explanatory and critical framework of the concept of cultural resistance has to be provided.

2.1. Conceptualization of Cultural Resistance

In his distinct book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said provides two different definitions of culture. In the first, Said defines culture as "all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exists in aesthetic forms, one of whose principle aims is pleasure."[1] This definition thinks of culture as a work of art that simply aims to provide the reader with aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment. It does not take into account the historical,

[1] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xii.

political, and socio-cultural context from which culture emerges because it considers culture as autonomous. However, the "relative autonomy" of culture has been challenged, for example, by both literary and media culture that imperialism has created to serves its economic, social and political purposes and by cultural forms that post-colonialism has produced to challenge the Eurocentric discourses of imperialism.

For this reason, Said sets out to examine how a word has been as devastating as well as subversive as sword. In his second definition of culture, he provides a broad and problematic conceptualization that takes into consideration the relation between culture and imperialism as well as between culture and resistance. He argues:

> Culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought . . . In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation and the state; this differentiates "us" from "them," almost always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that as we see in recent "returns" to culture and tradition.[2]

This view of culture goes beyond merely providing artistic qualities or aesthetic pleasure. Here, Said conceives culture as a site of conflict in which every society strives for producing the best. More importantly, he defines culture in relation to power and identity where it can be used aggressively to construct the binary opposition of "us" and "them".Therefore, he warns from the fixed and essentialist perception of identity that is "opposed to the permissiveness associated with such relatively liberal philosophies as multiculturalism and hybridity."[3] He goes on to emphasize the political force of culture, saying: "In this second sense culture is a source of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another."[4] This means that culture can be considered as a battleground or a "contact zone," to use the term of Mary Louise Pratt,[5] in which the politics of domination and resistance discursively contend with one another.

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[2] Ibid., p. xiii.
[3] Ibid., p. xiii.
[4] Ibid., p. xiii.
[5] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 7.

Concerning his second definition of culture, Said clearly states: "As someone who has spent his entire professional life teaching literature . . . I have found it a challenge not to see culture in this way,"[6] in the realm of interaction between aesthetics and politics. This understanding of culture stems from Said's contrapuntal reading of texts that, for him, must take into account two processes, the operation of imperialism and the articulation of resistance.[7] "The contrapuntal approach," Colin Symes contends, "enabled Said to see cultures not as monolithic, pure entities, but as overlapping, as interdependent, in which the patterns of power and domination are never expressed completely, but are accompanied by resistance and subversion, by point and counterpoint."[8] In this respect, the dominant narratives can be questioned, challenged and even changed with more critical and logical alternatives.

Said's analysis of the intertwined relationship between Orientalist discourse and Western power is, as he acknowledges, informed by Michel Foucault's notion of discourse.[9] His view is also in congruence with Foucault's dictum of "where there is power, there is resistance."[10] Nevertheless, he criticizes Foucault for his theoretical oversight of the imperial experience and the history of colonialist practice[11] as well as his neglect of the considerable outpouring of oppositional culture and literature, "focussing instead upon the individual as dissolved in an ineluctably advancing "microphysics of power" that it is hopeless to resist."[12] This means that Foucault has eclipsed any serious consideration of resistance or liberation as a whole and, instead, imprisoned his idea of resistance within the individual's struggle to get his/her problems solved. To get these points clear, Said has consistently drawn on Foucault's work both for theorizing that power is enacted not only "through violence and invasion, but also through the production of knowledge and information"[13] and for analyzing literary and media texts "as part

[6] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiv.

[7] Ibid., p.66.

[8] Colin Symes, "The Paradox of the Canon: Edward W. Said and Musical Transgression", *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* vol. 27, no. 3, 2006, p. 317. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596300600838751 (Accessed 03 September 2016).

[9] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 3.

[10] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 95.

[11] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 41.

[12] Ibid., p. 278.

[13] Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), p. 30.

of a larger discursive formation."[14] But, he has done huge and considerable adjustment in vision and understanding to take account of how imperial ideas have been challenged and resisted by postcolonial writings. He shows that "what Foucault has called subjugated knowledges have erupted across the field once controlled."[15]

The political efficacy of culture has been masterfully addressed by Barbara Harlow in her *Resistance Literature.* In this book, Harlow emphasizes that "the theory of resistance literature is in its politics."[16] For her, *Resistance Literature* has emphatically emerged to "wage struggle for liberation on many levels and in many arenas."[17] In her two chapters entitled "Resistance Poetry" and "Narratives of resistance," Harlow sets out to provide many examples to show her readers how literary poets and novelists of resistance literature have challenged the forces of oppression and exploitation either by redefining the cultural images of the present or by rewriting the past in order to open up the possibility for non-oppressive future.[18]

On this basis, culture becomes a means of resistance and revolt and that is why I use the terms "resistance" and "cultural resistance" interchangeably.[19] Setting from this conception of culture, one can argue that the cultural flow of resistant discourses have the potential to dismantle and delegitimize oppressive experience in its various manifestations and to endorse the act of resistance as legitimate and necessary. The following section is devoted to discussing Fanon's response to the theoretical elaborations produced by colonialist and imperialist culture and by that of orthodox nationalism. In other words, it tries to answer these questions: How can Fanon's theory of resistance be interconnected with the culture of mutual recognition? What are the characteristics of his thought? And how and under which condition does he formulate such thought?

[14] Ibid., p. 117.
[15] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 243.
[16] Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, p. 30.
[17] Ibid., p. xviii.
[18] Ibid., particularly pp. 42, 62, 63, and 90.
[19] When talking about resistance in literary or filmic texts, it is clearly understood that the talk is about cultural resistance that is discursively articulated.

2.2. Fanon and the Construction of Cultural Recognition

Frantz Fanon provides a specific analysis of the theme of recognition in his influential book *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon builds his theory of cultural recognition on Hegel's master-slave dialectic. He reformulates Hegel's paradigm to analyze the relationship between the white master and black slave in the colonial context. As Said mentions, Fanon reread "Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic in light of the colonial situation."[20] But, the master in the colonial situation "differs basically from the master described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work."[21]

In Hegel's master-slave dialectic, "the master gets his recognition through another consciousness."[22] This means that the master desires to possess the slave by making him provide a servitude to him as a way of seeking recognition from the slave since he depends on the other for his self-consciousness. But, the slave's labor sets him free because, in Hegel's dialectic, the slave "turns away from the master and turns toward the object."[23] That is, he begins to consider the master as an object and realizes that his objecthood needs to be transformed into subjecthood.

Unlike Hegel's paradigm, the white master, in Fanon's model, is not seeking recognition from the slave since he considers him as a part of nature and as a laughable thing.[24] As cited above, "what he wants from the slave is not recognition but work."[25] The white master wants him only to perform labor for him. In this way, Fanon's slave finds no liberation in his work. In other words, the slave wants to be recognized as a subject but the master cannot grant him such recognition. Accordingly, the black slave rejects to remain in the place that has been assigned for him.[26] He discovers that "the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin,"[27] till he

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[20] Ibid., p. 210.

[21] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* p. 172, note 8.

[22] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel,* (New York: Cornel University Press, 1980), p. 18.

[23] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* p. 172, note 8.

[24] Homi Bhaba's perception of resistance in terms of what he calls "mimicry", "assimilation", or "integration" seems not to work in such colonial context. As Fanon argues, the colonizers do not seek recognition from the colonized, but labor and wealth. So, the identity transformation of the colonized seems not to matter for the colonizers. In this regard, Fanon's idea of counter-violence is to be legitimated because other strategies of resistance appear to be rendered impossible.

[25] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* p. 172, note 8.

[26] See ibid., pp. 168-169.

accepts his imposed violence. He also "knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory,"[28] Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Therefore, the slave turns to the notion of violence to impose his own existence and achieve his desire of reciprocal recognition.

It is worth noting that the marginalized and oppressed people have a desire. "The first sense of 'desire' accords with the first sense of 'self-consciousness," Scott Jenkins writes.[29] In the colonial context, self-consciousness of the enslaved people appears in the form of the desire to be recognized as subjects who have the same power and agency as the master. Fanon describes desire as a driving force in the liberating struggle. He illustrates, in the following passage, how the slave's desire to mutual and reciprocal recognition can take the master-slave dialectic into a new perspective.

> When it encounters resistance from the other, self-consciousness undergoes the experience of desire ... As soon as I desire I ask to be considered. I am not merely here and now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity—in so far as I pursue something other than life.[30]

Here, Fanon notes that the native is conscious that the white skin is of no more value than his skin till he accepts his daily insulting orders. Thus, he must demand mutual recognition in order to shift the totalizing vertical dialectic into a horizontal one. This represents the colonized's aspiration to "a world of reciprocal recognitions,"[31] as cited before. For Fanon, this struggle is not only concerned with the survival of the body, but also, and most importantly, with the survival of the soul since the colonized, as stated above, "pursue[s] something other than life." In his Forward to Fanon, Sardar says that "the struggle is concerned as much with freedom from

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[27] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 45.

[28] Ibid., p.43.

[29] Scott Jenkins, "Self-Consciousness in the Phenomenology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed., Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 85.

[30] Quoted in Homi Bhabha, "Forward to Fanon's 1986 Edition," in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p, xxx.

[31] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 170.

colonialism as with liberation from the suffocating embrace of Europe."[32] As a colonized, Fanon is thirsty for independence and he aspires to breathe the air of liberty. So, he looks for ways of resistance through which he can achieve such end.

In this regard, Fanon sees that one of the appropriate steps in the struggle for liberation is to react. And the first reaction of the black man is to say "no to degradation of man. No to exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom."[33] But, as Sardar asserts, "the colonizer is totally deaf to the political condition of the colonized and what the colonized has to say."[34] Consequently, the desperate colonized subject looks for another liberating alternative through which he could "retrieve a certain dignity and sense of Self that colonial violence has destroyed."[35] The struggle of the colonized subalterns for sense of Self and dignity within the colonial context can be appropriated to analyze the marginalized and women's struggle for agency in the postcolonial context. However, the means or strategies used to achieve such desire of mutual recognition might be profoundly different. That is, the colonial context is governed by racial and political exclusion and economic exploitation exercised by violence. Thus, it seems urgent, for Fanon, to look for appropriate steps that can make an end to the colonial violence.

Having experienced colonial racism and comprehended the violent structure of colonialism, Fanon reaches, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, to the conclusion that "only violence pays."[36] For him, the structure of colonialism is absolutely saturated with violence and exploitation. He states that "colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."[37] In other words, he emphasizes the liberating role of violence in a situation where all other means have failed.

The violent confrontation, for Fanon, gives rise to a new consciousness by which the colonized people can achieve their desire for liberation. He assumes that such desire "can be

[32] Ziauddin Sardar, "Foreword to the 2008 edition," Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. xii.
[33] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 173.
[34] Sardar, "Foreword to the 2008 edition," Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. xvii.
[35] Quoted in Alan Ramón Ward, "Enabling Resistance", *ANGELAKI journal of the theoretical humanities*, vol. 20, no. 4, December 2015, p. 225. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2015.1096649 (Accessed 27 August 2016).
[36] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 61.
[37] Ibid.

achieved only through conflict and through the risk that conflict implies."[38] Counter-violence, For Fanon, operates at the national and individual levels. At the national level, it helps unite the masses under the notions of common cause and national destiny; it enables them to overcome the colonial politics of divide and rule. And at the individual level, "violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."[39] As summarized by Hussein Bulhan, "[t]he practice of counter violence … fosters cohesion among the oppressed, purges them of their complexes, and rehabilitates the alienated."[40]

As hinted above, Fanon's theory of decolonization stems from "the perspective of a colonized subject [who has] a direct experience of racism," so he is, as Ziauddin Sardar affirms, "quite different from most postcolonial writers."[41] For him, colonialism brings about two dichotomous worlds saturated with violently reciprocal exclusivity. He describes the Manichean world and alienation created by French colonialism in the Algerian context that causes political oppression, cultural degradation, and economic deprivation as follows:

> The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. . . . its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners. . . . The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs.[42]

In sharp words, Fanon, here, rebelliously lays bare the racial and exploitative colonial practices in Algeria. He describes the spatiality of the colonial Manichean world in which the colonized is completely denigrated. In response to such fundamentally racist and unjust system, he finds out that violent confrontation is the only means for the path to liberation. That is, the gap between the 'white' settlers and the 'dirty' natives can only be bridged by violence. In this regard, Said

[38] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 170.
[39] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 94.
[40] Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1985), p. 117.
[41] Sardar, "Foreword to the 2008 edition," Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. x and xviii respectively.
[42] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 39.

declares that "no wonder that the Fanonist solution to such discourse is violence."[43] He justifies Fanon's position of emancipatory violence on the consideration of being necessary and legitimate response to the colonial violence. Said brings to the fore two models of decolonization offered by William Butler Yeats and Amilcar Cabral who see revolutionary violence against outside domination as inevitable, although it, for them, requires to be balanced with the discourse of reason, political process and cultural resistance.[44]

With this debate in mind, Fanon seems to be very clear about the importance of violence in order to put an end to racial oppression and economic exploitation. Thus, he talks not only about textual but also about practical resistance. He writes that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon."[45] He goes on to illustrate: "Decolonization is the meeting of two forces" where "their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons."[46]

In spite of his underestimated contribution to removing the muzzle that has silenced the black man, Fanon has been criticized by many critics for neglecting gender issues and for his concept of the peasantry as the most authentic revolutionary. For example, Bart Moore-Gilbert accuses him of sexism and gender bias. He suggests that *Black Skin, White Masks* "discriminates pointedly between the experiences of men and women of color."[47] Regarding Fanon's view of the peasantry as the most revolutionary class, Emmanuel Hansen criticizes him for his

> inability to stratify the peasantry beyond the broad distinctions of rich and poor, his lack of assessment of the revolutionary potential of each stratum, [and] his lack of clarity in

[43] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 49.
[44] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 235, 275.
[45] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 35.
[46] Ibid., p. 36.
[47] Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 145. Homi Bhabha answers back to this blame, saying: "Fanon's use of the word "man" usually connotes a phenomenological quality of humanness, inclusive of man and woman and, for that very reason, ignores the question of gender difference. The problem stems from Fanon's desire to set the question of sexual difference within the problematic of cultural difference… which is suggestive" (Bhabha, "Forward to Fanon's 1986 Edition" in Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. .xxxvi-xxxvii.

> delineating the conditions under which each stratum could become predisposed to revolutionary warfare.[48]

Here, Hansen is skeptical of Fanon's assumption that "the peasants alone are revolutionary."[49] Moreover, he criticizes Fanon's failure to provide his reader with a certain criterion by which the reader can know the stratum to which the peasants belong. This assumption seems to neglect the multi-dimension of anti-colonial resistance.

In addition to that, it seems that Fanon appears to be sometimes undecided about the proper strategy for achieving liberation. In my reading of Fanon, I have found two apparently contradictory positions. In one section of his book, he emphatically states that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon,"[50] and "violence alone . . . makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them."[51] In another section, he admits that, in certain cases, there are other strategies outside the arena of violence which can resolve the situation of oppression. In this connection, Fanon writes:

> If we have taken the example of Algeria to illustrate our subject, it is not at all with the intention of glorifying our own people, but simply to show the important part played by the war in leading them toward consciousness of themselves. It is clear that other peoples have come to the same conclusion in different ways. We know for sure today that in Algeria the test of force was inevitable; but other countries through political action and through the work of clarification undertaken by a party have led their people to the same results.[52]

In this passage, Fanon draws back his previous broad generalization saturated with the word "always" to link his theory of violence to the Algerian case. That is, here, Fanon situates his conception of violence within the colonial context of Algeria. He admits that other colonized

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[48] Evelyne Accad, "Frantz Fanon: Social and Political Thought by Emmanuel Hansen," *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 308-310, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818953 (Accessed 23 July 2016).

[49] Fanon, *The wretched of the Earth*, p. 61.

[50] Ibid., p. 35.

[51] Ibid., p. 147.

[52] Ibid., p. 193.

countries have resolved the colonial oppression by strategies such as "political action" and "work of clarification." Furthermore, he does not entirely reject other diplomatic channels of resistance provided that they should lead to the desired end of liberation. In this regard, he clearly states: "If need be the native can accept a compromise with colonialism, but never a surrender of principle."[53] This implies that the colonized, in his fight for freedom, can use every means available.

It is important not to reduce Fanon's theory of resistance to an incitement to violence. Although he emphasizes the effectiveness of counter-violence in the anti-colonial struggle, he does not turn a blind eye to the significant values of other forms of resistance in order to confront the diverse practices of colonialism. As William Greider states, in his "Forward" to Jack Shaheen's *Reel Bad Arabs*, "the power to depict certain "others" as innately strange and dangerous—as foul creatures not like the rest of us—is surely as devastating as the physical force of weaponry."[54] With regard to the complex tropes of colonialism, Fanon argues that

> colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.[55]

Here, Fanon explains that colonialism is not merely satisfied with taking control over the native and his land, but it returns back to the history of the colonized people and "distorts, disfigures and destroys it." It tries to make them feel that they are people without history, without figures, without civilization and, more importantly, without culture. Therefore, they are, from the colonial perspective, in need for the colonizer's intervention. This brings to the fore Karl Marx's ironically famous expression invoked by Edward Said as an epigraph to his book *Orientalism*: "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented."[56]

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[53] Ibid., p. 143.

[54] William Greider, "Forward," in Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. viii.

[55] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 210.

[56] Said, *Orientalism*, epigraph.

The reclaiming of national history works in twofold. First, it lays bare the colonial tropes and provides the natives with strong sense of identity. Second, it brings the buried or distorted national history into the spotlight and rectifies it from the colonized's viewpoints. In so doing, the natives can profoundly counter the colonial representations of their history and produce more valid alternatives. These alternatives can challenge the essentially ideological narratives of empire that try to strip the natives of their history, honor and identity. They can prove that "there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory, and solemnity."[57]

The importance of the imaginative rediscovery of the past is also stressed by other postcolonial theorists like Edward Said and Stuart Hall. The acts of reclaiming the colonized history and national culture, for Said, show that the colonized geographical space has "a history and tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence."[58] In a similar vein, Hall holds the view that the hidden and silenced histories have played a critical role in the emergence of some of the most important social movements of our time. [59] The textual images of the past are, for Hall, "resources of resistance and identity, with which to confront the fragmented and pathological ways in which that experience has been reconstructed within the dominant regimes of cinematic and visual representation of the West." [60]

No doubt, Fanon's theory of resistance is very useful on both theoretical and political levels. His exposure of colonial racism and his call for regaining national identity seem pertinent to the analysis of the Egyptian film, *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004), by Youssef Chahine. In this film, Chahine reveals the stereotypically racial tropes of American Imperialism toward the Arab world. Unlike the imperial representations which try to strip Arabs of their culture and identity, the film also represents Alexandria as a space of multi ethnicities and multi identities, coexisting with each other on the basis of mutual recognition. Moreover, it brings to the fore the aesthetic and cultural values of Egyptian cinema and compares it to the American one which is dominated by films of action and violence. The Egyptian

[57] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 210.

[58] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

[59] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," in *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, eds., Philip Simpson, Andrew Utterson and Karen J. Shepherdson (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), p. 387.

[60] Ibid., p. 388. The issues of rectifying the colonial and national elitist historiography are masterfully discussed by Edward Said and subaltern studies theorists. This will be illustrated in the next two sections.

protagonist, namely Yehya, is seen more elegant and creative than his American counterparts. The native culture that has been devalued and homogenized by the colonizer turns out to be rich and heterogeneous.

In addition, Fanon's as well as Said's interests in bringing back the buried or distorted history seem applicable to the Moroccan film, Hamid *Zoughi's Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal*. The film disproves the colonial and national stereotypes inflicted on Moroccan shikhat as epitomes of shame and of all that is low in the society. Instead, it represents the protagonist shikha Hadda Zaidia as a powerful agent of social change. Thus, the film brings to the fore what has been distorted by colonial representations and rearticulates it in a way that disproves such representations and shows profoundly different images.

Furthermore, Fanon's theoretical insights certainly help me undermine the Western myth of 'civilizing mission' and lay bare the politics of racism and domination. His visions also provide me with analytical tools by which I can profoundly dismantle the claim that the 'wretched of the earth' is incapable to react because he is either unaware of the conditions of his own oppression or he is frozen in the state of submissiveness. In so doing, his theories arm me with theoretical potential by which I can relocate the colonial power and replace the absolute contrast and exclusivity with mutual recognition.

In this connection, it would be also instructive to gesture how Fanon's insights are particularly relevant for the discussion of Saad Charaibi's anti-colonial film *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000). In this film, Chraibi exposes the practices of colonial racism and exploitation. French colonialism is seen dividing the colonial world into two unequal compartments: the colonial garden and the dry native village. For being aware that the colonizer is of no more value than him till he accepts his imposed exploitation, the starved native is shown sabotaging the water pumps in order to starve the colonizer and confront his economic exploitation. This violent act is first carried out by an individual, namely Moh, who does not belong to the nationalist movement.

But, unlike Fanon's claim which dictates that if events go one step further, "the leader of the nationalist party keeps his distance with regard to that violence."[61] In this film, the leader of the nationalist party is seen appreciating the individual's rebellious act, coordinating with him and later adopting his strategy. Furthermore, the colonizer's attempts to impose his supremacy through violence and exploitation create a kind of thirst and desire for liberation. Thus, the native

[61] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 62.

sets out to put an end to such aggressive and exploitative practices for the purpose of creating a world based on the ground of mutual respect. This will be illustrated in detail in the analytical part.

It is safe to say that all kinds of oppression have psychological effects on the oppressed. Therefore, Fanon's theory of resistance, though focusing too much on the struggle against racism, colonialism, and national essentialism, can be adapted and extended to include the struggle against multiple forms of oppression. As the colonized desires to be mutually recognized as free and independent subject, other marginalized people have also the same desire. They aspire to be treated on the principles of "democratic citizenship of equal liberties, opportunities, and responsibilities for individuals."[62] This connotes that the desire for mutual recognition represents the driving force behind their resistance. However, the contexts and practices of power do matter in determining the appropriate activities of resistance.

What has been said above confirms that Fanon's voice is still important and relevant to the contemporary context as long as racism and exploitation are still exercised. In spite of the fact that the world has undergone several changes since Fanon's time due to the flow of migration, the circulation and distribution of new technologies by which the world looks like a 'global village', the structures of racism and injustice still lives on. In his forward to Fanon, Sardar argues that "all sources of exploitation resemble one another."[63]

What, indeed, still needs to be problematized, here, is whether Fanon's notion of reciprocal recognition can be framed within the circle of seeking independence or it is an unending process for liberation of the oppressed people and articulation of the minority voices. Fanon certainly acknowledges the role that nationalism has played in the anti-colonial struggle. However, he goes beyond nationalism to set forth a more liberating and humanitarian framework that involves a transformation into social consciousness. In this regard, he composes a whole chapter entitled "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,"[64] where he uncovers the pitfalls of national consciousness and insists on transforming it into social consciousness. He states: "If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be

[62] Amy Gutmann, ed. and Intro., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. xii.

[63] Ziauddin Sardar, "Foreword to Fanon's 2008 Edition," Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. xix.

[64] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 148-205.

taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness."[65] The Egyptian film under study *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos) by Chahine shows that nationalism can be turned into a weapon at the hands of the national elites to suppress their opponents and perpetuate the interests of the national ruling party. This means that national consciousness provides no guarantee for accommodation of the idea of citizenship.

Transcending the notion of national consciousness to that of social consciousness is also relevant to my analysis of the diversity of the anti-colonial resistance in the film *'Atach* (Thirst). This film celebrates the active participation of the individual characters like Moh and his uncle Zayd as well as women's significant roles like that of Moh's mother and wife in the anti-colonial struggle against French colonialism in the same way it celebrates the roles of the national elites. It also exposes the pitfalls of nationalism in the sense that the man of principles and values Moh who does not belong to the nationalist movement is killed at the end, despite of his active participation in the anti-colonial struggle. For not belonging to the national liberation movement and for providing labor for the French lieutenant, he is accused as traitor and hence killed by the policy of accusation. In this regard, nationalism fails to account for social specificities and multi-faces of the anti-colonial resistance and, thus, reproduces the same practices it intends to oppose. The problems of nationalism will be further dealt with in the following section of this chapter, namely "Said and the Question of Resistance," since both Fanon and Said share the idea of transcending national consciousness to that of social and human consciousness.

2.3. Said and the Question of Resistance

The previous section has closed with Fanon's attempt to create the culture of recognition within the colonial context through more focus on the notion of violence and counter-violence. With the Palestinian critic Edward Said, more concern is placed on dismantling cultural hegemony through the rhetoric of rewriting back, the production of postcolonial text. While Fanon devotes much focus on the practical resistance, Said devotes much attention to the power of the word to subvert dichotomous relationship and articulate repressed histories.

[65] Ibid., p. 203.

Said makes it clear that "the coming of the white man brought fourth some sort of resistance."[66]Along with the armed resistance which "culminated in the great movement of decolonization all across the Third World," Said argues that there has been also "considerable efforts in cultural resistance."[67] Although Said "almost obliterates the role and the voice of the natives"[68] in the colonial narratives, he endows the subordinate with power and agency in the process of writing back, in the postcolonial texts. That is, he moves from politics of blame and denunciation, typified in his book *Orientalism*, to the politics of liberation which he articulates in *Culture and Imperialism.* His influential book *Orientalism* represents a key point and an important entry to understand the strategy of resistance that is articulated in *Culture and Imperialism*. To illustrate more, he takes us from the image of the Orient approach to the colonized-centered approach.[69] This means that he shifts his focus from the colonized as a victim to the colonized as a powerful agent in the socio-cultural change and transformation.

In *Orientalism*, Said draws the reader's attention to the tropes and stereotypes floated and/or submerged in the colonial discourse. In *Culture and Imperialism*, he stresses the need for alternative knowledge to address such hegemonic modes of production. That is, he goes beyond the denunciation of the Western representation of the Orient to cultivate a counter-hegemonic discourse. He assumes that the production of postcolonial literature has the potential to profoundly demystify and subvert the Orientalist myth put ironically by Marx, dictating that the Orientals "cannot represent themselves and therefore must be represented by others."[70]

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[66] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xii.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Khalid Bekkaoui, *Signs of Spectacular Resistance: The Spanish Moor and British Orientalism* (Casablanca: Najah El Jadida, 1998), p. 32.

[69] There is a kind of similarity in the shifts that Edward Said's theory and feminist literary theory have undergone. For instance, Toril Moi takes us from the early 'Images of Women' approach, typified by Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, which focuses on women as victims in male authored texts, to a women-centered approach as Elaine Showalter puts it in *A Literature of Their Own*. That is, criticizing the representation of women in male authored texts gives way to women's writing. There has been a general move in women's studies from woman as a victim to woman as an agent, from the analysis of oppression to the analysis of resistance. Likewise, criticizing the construction of the Orient in the Orientalist discourse gives way to the mode of liberating alternative, to post-colonial text. Though Said limits his theory of writing back to the deconstruction of colonial narratives, the notion of writing back could be appropriated to write back to any hegemonic discourse. For more discussion about the shift that feminist literary theory has undergone, see Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.41- 50.

[70] Quoted in Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 277.

In the postcolonial texts, "the wretched of the earth" writes back to the power that has oppressed them. What distinguishes this kind of cultural resistance is its attempt "to create a non-coercive, non-dominative and non-essentialist knowledge,"[71] rather than to reproduce the same hierarchal practices. This means that the postcolonial modes of production aim to undermine the dominant, coercive networks of knowledge.

As the colonial texts have been implicated in justifying and legitimating imperial expansion, Said assumes that the postcolonial texts have also the potential to deconstruct colonial representations and make them "lose their justification and legitimacy."[72]In this regard, Said adopts one of Michel Foucault's central ideas of the relationship between knowledge and power to argue that there is interlink between Western textual representation and domination. This epistemological relation could be adapted to propose that there is interplay between the filmic texts under study, as cultural products, and resistance; these films arguably lay bare the oppressive tropes of the dominant powers and rearticulate them in subversive ways. Put another way, these films problematize the colonial and national mainstream narration of history through bringing the histories of the marginalized people and migrant's exile into the spotlight. Thus, I argue that the resistance raised in the films under analysis is consciously oriented to create culture of recognition.

It is worth mentioning that there are two themes dominating *Culture and Imperialism.* The first deals with how culture has been used as a trope to justify and reinforce colonial expansion and exploitation. The second tackles the idea of resistance, the production of counter-hegemonic knowledge. So, Said seems not only interested in dealing with the formations of imperialism, but also with resistance to it. He maps the notion of cultural resistance, of decolonization, in a whole chapter titled "Resistance and Opposition." He argues that resistance operates through the production of postcolonial text, because the colonized, for him, is totally muffled in the colonial text.

In fact, there is always a voice of resistance, interacting with the force of domination and confinement. And it seems crucial for Said to bind the Westerners and Orientals in a new cultural

[71] Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 55.

[72] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 200.

space in which "a new understanding of culture can be opened."[73] In explaining the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized, Said states that to

> ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the past century.[74]

Here, Said delineates the intersection of the imperial power and its contestatory discourse of resistance, be it expressed in terms of reconciliation or conflict. He contends that a history is a site made up of various overlapping and contested terrains that struggle over power and authority. Perceiving culture as a contested domain allows us to understand the dialectic interaction between power and resistance. That is, as culture can be used as a powerful agent of domination, it can also be alternatively used as a powerful site for resistance and the interaction between the two seems central to Said's theory of resistance.

In his theorization of the notion of resistance, Said believes in Michel Foucault's argument: "where there is power, there is resistance."[75] In spite of having a clear debt to Foucault's notion of the conscious marriage between power and resistance, Said signals his departure from him. As Khalid Bekkaoui points out, Said criticizes Foucault for "his failure to take into consideration the insurgency of the societies he deals with and for his inability to provide alternatives to social and political coercion."[76] In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said writes that "Foucault's theory [of power] has drawn a circle around itself, constituting a unique territory in which Foucault has imprisoned himself and others with him."[77] He continues to say that "Foucault's archaeologies… make not even a nominal allowance for emergent movements, and non for revolutions, counter-hegemony, or historical blocks."[78] For Said, Foucault seems not committed to change power

[73] Meili Steele, *Critical Confrontations: Literary Theories in Dialogue* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), p.99.

[74] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xx.

[75] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, p. 95.

[76] Bekkaoui, *Signs of Spectacular Resistance*, p. 30.

[77] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 245. See also Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, p. 65.

[78] Ibid., p. 246.

relation in the society since he leaves little room for resistance. That is, Foucault seems obsessed with the operation of power rather than with the articulation of resistance.[79]

Unlike Foucault, Said sets out to foster a counter-hegemonic discourse by which the marginalized people can "resist power or rewrite it in terms that restore agency to themselves."[80] In other words, culture of resistance is explored, by Said, in terms of the capacity of the colonized to write back to empire. He locates cultural resistance in the production of counter-hegemonic knowledge that is enacted through rewriting colonial and, to add, narrowly national literatures. He offers examples of undoing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* by African writers like Ngugi Wa Thiogno's *The River Between* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* from the point of view of the colonized. In these canonical rewritings, "the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the colonialist."[81]

It is worth mentioning that Said talks about two kinds of resistance: primary and ideological resistance. He associates the former with the "recovery of geographical territory . . . through literally fighting against outside intrusion."[82] And he connects the latter with what Basil Davidson refers to as the cultural reconstitution of a "shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system."[83] The latter form of resistance is concerned with recovering and restoring repressed histories and rearticulating cultural identity that has been either distorted or effaced by the dominant representations, be it colonial or national ones. As Arnold Krupat states, "there is always a return of the repressed in one form or another: and now it is no longer possible to pretend the other is simply silent or absent because the formerly conquered write—as they fight—back."[84] This means the dominant power's attempts to silence the voice of the centrally significant Other would be rendered

[79] Unlike Said who assumes that the subjects resist from a position outside the system of power—through the process of rewriting colonial literature—Foucault considers that "resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power." (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, p. 95). For more illustration, see Bekkaoui, *Signs of Spectacular Resistance*, pp. 30-34, and Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, pp. 67-68.

[80] Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture*, p. xiv.

[81] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 212.

[82] Ibid., p. 209.

[83] Quoted in ibid.

[84] Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon* (California: University of California Press, 1989), p.3-4.

impossible because the repressed voice always returns back. Krupat, here, contends that the notion of "writing back" and "fighting back" totally subverts the mainstream representation of the Other as silent or absent.

Mustapha Marrouchi also draws our attention to the startling pleasure the reader might feel in reading Said. He cites a significant passage of Egbal Ahmed, which describes the brilliance of Said's voice and the rightness of his vision.

> It was left to the African, Caribbean, and Asian writer to imagine the alternative and start writing back. Edward Said is foremost among those who pushed this quest forward beyond nationalism and post-colonial statehood, crossing boundaries to interpret the world and the text "based on counter point " as he would say, "many voices produce history."[85]

Here, Egbal Ahmed appreciates Said for his articulation of post-nationalist theoretical culture in which many voices, such as those of the colonized people, immigrant population and oppressed minorities, are recognized in the narration of history. Said's view of going beyond nationalism seems to be deeply influenced by Fanon's theorization on the pitfalls of national consciousness. He states that "Fanon was the first major theorist of anti-imperialism to realize that orthodox nationalism followed along the same track hewn out by imperialism."[86] Citing Fanon so often, Said stresses the importance of Fanon's voice in the sense that "he expresses the immense cultural shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation."[87] In this vein, resistance becomes a process in discovering and bringing back what has been suppressed by the dominant ideologies.

The struggle over domination seems to be very complex because it cannot be simply reduced to the notion of opposition or a mere rejection of the dominant power. Rather, it incorporates negotiation and rectification of ideas, imaginings and representations. In other words, resistance is not to be understood as merely a reactionist movement to either colonial or narrowly national discourses but more importantly as a production of non-hegemonic alternatives

[85] Quotedin Mustapha Marrouchi, *Edward Said at the Limits* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 5.

[86] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 273.

[87] Ibid., p. 268.

that can pave the way for the culture of recognition. For this reason, resistance is a fluid notion that defies literal definitions. Drawing on *The Empire Write Back*, Said points out to the ambiguous meaning of resistance where he writes:

> Resistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history. It is particularly important to see how much this alternative reconception is based on breaking down binaries between cultures. Certainly as the title of a fascinating book has it, *writing back* to metropolitan cultures, disrupting the European narratives of the Orient and Africa, replacing them with either a more playful or a more powerful new narrative style is a major component in the process.[88]

In this regard, the political consciousness of the colonized can never be frozen within the state of negation and reaction to imperialism, but it goes beyond that to break the binary opposition between cultures. That is, in the postcolonial text, the postcolonial subject, endowed with the power to narrate, seems capable of bringing back his subjugated knowledge to face the Eurocentric as well as essentialist historicizing. Said, here, appears to define resistance as a revisionist approach that aims to question the elitist historiographies of the metropolitan cultures and disrupt the Western narratives of the Orient and Africa through producing an alternative mode of production. As interested in cultural resistance, he tries to revise the literary canon by articulating the histories of the oppressed in order to make it more inclusive and representative.

It would be instructive, here, to give particular instances of postcolonial texts and compare them to the colonial cultural products in order to show how Said's theory is very useful. In this connection, the civilizing mission "la mission civilisatrice" French claims to have brought to Morocco, as it is promoted in Western narrative like Edith Wharton's *In Morocco,* is totally destabilized by Moroccan texts like Saad Chraibi's film *'Atach* (Thirst 2000). In *In Morocco,* Wharton tries to justify the colonial occupation and defend the French colonial history through promoting the infrastructure and progress General Lyautey claims to have brought to Morocco. For instance, she states that "thanks to the energy and the imagination of one of the greatest of colonial administrators, the country . . . is safe and open as the opposite shore of Spain."[89] She

[88] Ibid., p. 216.
[89] Edith Wharton, *In Morocco* (Fes: The Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, 2005), p. 18.

continues, saying that "ten years ago there was not a wheeled vehicle in Morocco."[90] On the contrary, the Moroccan film *Thirst* exposes the starvation, the exploitation, and the incarceration that the colonizer has brought to Morocco. To subvert the colonial myth of civilizing mission, Chraibi entitles his film *'Atach,* a word that literally and figuratively conveys the colonized's thirst for liberation.

The postcolonial mode of production can also be compared to the American film *Casablanca* by Michael Curtiz. In this colonial film, Morocco is not depicted as a realistic space. That is, Casablanca is reduced to a piece of décor and to a mere passage because people come to it in order to flee to the land of "freedom", America. Furthermore, this film does not show any kind of resistance. It reinforces the stereotypes about the Other from the Mexican to Moroccan in the sense that they are all shown as backward, submissive and lazy.[91] Unlike this colonial film, the post-colonial film *Thirst* articulates the indigenous resistance to colonialism in a way that does not demonize or stereotype individual colonial characters as it will be illustrated in detail in the analytical part.

Likewise, the Egyptian film *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004), by Youssef Chahine, disproves the American slogans of democracy and freedom. The American politics is seen governed by racism, intolerance, and narrow interests which are devoid of any humanitarian dimension. To highlight the American racism towards the Arab world, the film director shows that the Egyptian protagonist is even alienated by his young American son who rejects to recognize him as his father. In a similar vein, the Yemeni film *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a, 2005), by Bader Ben Hirsi, relocates the boundary that Orientalist discourse has been constructing between the self and the other. The encounter between the Italian photographer, Federico and the female vender, Amal, seems to bridge the distance between the insider and outsider as it is inferred from the way of their greeting responses and negotiation. Also, Federico and his Yemeni assistance have established strong, trustful and closer relationship. Unlike William Friedkin's American film, *Rules of Engagement* (2000), which represents Sana'a as space of terrorists and Yemeni civilians as source of threat, this film shows Sana'a as site of peace, coexistence, humor and recognition and Yemeni people as friendly rather than hostile to the cultural Other.

[90] Ibid.
[91] Michael Curtiz, dir., *Casablanca,* Warner Bros, 1942.

One further example is Abdelkader Lagtaâ film *Hubb fi al-Dar al-Bayda* (A Love Affair in Casablanca, 1991) which projects Casablanca as more liberal space than America itself. It reverses the dogmatic Western representation of the conservative East versus the liberal West and the religious Orient versus the secular Occident through dealing with the identity of naked body.[92] In his book *Morocco Bound*, Brian Edwards talks about the relocation of the American film *Casablanca* (1942) by the Moroccan film *Hubb fi al-Dar al-Bayda* (A Love Affair in Casablanca, 1991). Edwards states that the Moroccan filmmaker's, Abdelkader Lagtaâ, invoking of Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* is "a creative act that recasts the American film as pertaining to an older and moribund tradition and poses *Al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* as pertaining to a dynamic and modern Moroccan culture."[93] He continues to say that "this is itself a key interruption of both Moroccan and American national narratives, rewriting contemporary Morocco as young, vibrant, and modern and the United States as antiquated and outmoded."[94] The Moroccan film destabilizes the idea of America as liberal and modern destination by presenting American cinema as "an institution bound blindly to "tradition," and the United States as a state that censors that which errs from conservative morality."[95] This means that Moroccan directors dare to discuss cultural issues that they are still considered as cultural taboos in American culture.

The question that still needs to be accounted for, here, is whether Said limits himself to the colonial-anti-colonial struggle or goes beyond that to connect his theory of resistance to the idea of liberation. Advancing secular approach, both Fanon and Said try to transcend the national conception of postcolonial resistance. They attempt to revise history in the light of the decolonization process. So, Fanon's theorization on the pitfalls of nationalism and Said's notion of rewriting or writing back appear to be rhetorical strategies for liberation that goes beyond racial and national essence. The production of counter-hegemonic knowledge and the articulation of the culture of recognition require an acknowledgment of the multiple identities and their roles in the anti-colonial struggle and social reform.

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[92] Abdelkader Lagtaâ, dir., *Hubb fi al-Dar al-Bayda* (Love Affair in Casablanca), 1991. The English translation of the title is taken from Ginsberg and Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, p. 244.

[93] Brian Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 76.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

Said considers nationalism as "only one of the aspects of resistance, and not the more interesting or enduring one."[96] In an agreement with Fanon's vision, Said views that "nationalist consciousness can very easily lead to frozen rigidity; merely to replace white officers and bureaucrats with colored equivalents, he [Fanon] says, is no guarantee that the nationalist functionaries will not replicate the old dispensation."[97] That is, unless the national consciousness is transformed into social consciousness, the future would not be liberation but a replacement of domination by another.

Here, Said's and Fanon's call for the shift to political and social consciousness is particularly relevant to the discussion of the Egyptian film, *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos, 2007), by Youssef Chahine and Khaled Youssef. The film illustrates the dilemma of nationalism in that it could not accommodate the idea of citizenship. The national ruling class is seen exercising the practices of exploitation, political incarceration, and other kinds of oppression. Likewise, the Moroccan film *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention 2004) brings to the surface the story of a political detainee who has been physically and politically incarcerated till he becomes amnesiac. So, within the frame of nationalism, the country can be seen as home for the ruling elitists and prison for their opponents.

The idea of social consciousness seems also pertinent to the reconfiguration of the space in Chahine's *Alexandria . . . New York*, and Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a*. In the former, Alexandria is represented as a space of co-existence between multi-ethnicities and multi-cultures. In the latter, Sana'a is represented as home not only for the Self but also for the Other. This film takes us beyond dichotomous relationship. It tries to bridge the gaps between man and woman, rich and poor, tradition and modernity, as well as Orient and Occident. In the film, the encounters between these seemingly incompatible binaries are seen governed by negotiation, co-existence and love. In this respect, the above-mentioned films connect resistance with the idea of liberation. Thus, they pave the way for a reconstruction of alternative, non-coercive relationships envisioned from the perspectives of the marginalized people.

The changing circumstances may prove the validity of Said's aforementioned idea of overlapping history. One of the best examples that can illustrate this point is the Algerian film *Indigènes* (Days of Glory, 2006) by Rachid Bouchareb. This film depicts the enrolment of North

[96] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 266.
[97] Ibid., 214.

African soldiers, mainly four Moroccan protagonists, in the French army. It focuses on the French reliance on the North African soldiers which subverts the image of France as a powerful empire. The film presents to viewers a scene where they see a black Senegalese putting the French flag in the liberating area.[98] In so doing, the film shows that history is interactively overlapped. Consequently, it profoundly destabilizes the essentialist conception of home and identity. In this regard, Said's transcendence of national consciousness to that of social consciousness emphasizes the idea of heterogeneous identity. With this idea in mind, resistance cannot be simply seen as fighting for a piece of land since it would be turned to a kind of nativism which Fanon as well as Said reject. For them, nativism is considered as an alternative face of racism. Setting from this background, Fanon and Said conceptualize resistance as an unending process of rethinking the different practices of oppression.

Said's theoretical framework evidences the dynamics and mobility of the notion of resistance. Thus, his theorization of resistance can be appropriated to analyze the spaces of resistance in the nine films under analysis. For instance, the Moroccan anti-colonial resistance in the film *'Atach* (Thirst) is not simply represented as a struggle between two blocs: the colonial and the anti-colonial national movements. There is an acknowledgement and celebration of the role the individuals have played in the anti-colonial resistance. The filmmaker also makes it clear that such resistance is not to be reduced to a struggle for a piece of land, but rather it is a resistance against the practices of oppression, incarceration, and confinement. Moreover, the resistance articulated in the film can also be considered as a form of writing back to the stereotypes inflicted upon the Oriental as submissive and lacking logic.

From what has been said, resistance can be defined as a struggle for the values and principles upon which liberation, justice and equality are premised. This definition seems to project the concept of resistance as more dynamic and inclusive. If we understood resistance as a mere quest for independence, then resistance would be, after the departure of the colonizer, contained and extinguished. Therefore, the culture of resistance seems to be a process that dynamically responds to the experiences of oppression and proposes visions for a world of mutual co-existence. It does not simply seek to liberate the land from the colonial occupation to put it at the hands of the national elites. Rather, it tries to create an encompassing sense of

[98] Rachid Bouchareb, dir. *Indigènes (Days of Glory),* Mars Distribution, 2006.

identity within which different racial, national, class, gender and religious groups and individuals are fairly treated as equal citizens.

Although Said's theory of resistance can be adapted to relocate different types of domination, it seems appropriate to bring into discussion more inclusive theory which concretely advocates different kinds of subalternity and by which various subalternized voices can be articulated. Another significant issue, which Said seems to neglect, is whether the resistance of the subordinated stems from their own self-consciousness or from being mobilized by another consciousness such as that of the elites. This question represents a core in the subaltern studies' theories; hence, it will be dealt with in the following section.

2.4. History from Below: Subaltern Studies and the Articulation of the Marginalized Voices

In my discussion of Said, I have stressed the possibilities of reconstructing a non-coercive knowledge. In the works of Subaltern Studies critics, the subaltern histories are given important position and used as analytical tools to rectify the elitist discourses. In this vein, Said's theorization of cultural resistance seems not to contradict with Subaltern Studies understanding of the subaltern's insurgency in the sense that both meet in the point of rectifying the elitist bias and questioning colonialist and nationalist ideology. However, Subaltern Studies critics fill the gap that Said left out by dealing with different types of subordinations. So, their methodologies offer ample opportunities to go beyond Said's notion of writing back to the colonial and national histories to accommodate various kinds of marginalized's resistance. Further, what distinguishes the subaltern studies group is that they locate the agency of change or revision in the insurgent or the 'subaltern'.[99]

The word 'subaltern' was first used by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* to refer to "non-hegemonic groups or classes."[100] Gramsci used the term "subaltern" to particularly denote "the unorganized groups of rural peasants based in Southern Italy, who had no social or political consciousness as a group and were therefore

[99] Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 3.

[100] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 20.

susceptible to the ruling ideas, culture and leadership of the state."[101] That is, Gramsci used the term "subordinate" or "subaltern" to refer to those subjugated people whose voices could not be heard because of being effectively written out of the capitalist bourgeois narratives. Ranajit Guha took the term further to refer to "the general attributes of subordination . . . whether it is expressed in terms of class, cast, age, gender, and office or in any other way."[102] In other words, he used the term "subaltern" to refer to the people who are denied access to the historical representation in both Western and national elite records of India. Lisa Lowe illustrates that the Subaltern Studies group (SSG) "have targeted as their arena of contestation the way in which the history of Indian independence is told, from whose point of view, and with what materials."[103] Lowe, here, shows us how SSG contest the national record of Indian history and interrogate its reliability. They question the way in which national history is told, from whose perspective, and on which sources is built. She explains, with reference to the Indian context, what the Group mean by "subalternity." She writes:

> Within the context of the historiography of Indian nationalism and independence, they take *subalternity* to mean not simply the situations of the Indians vis-à-vis the British imperialists but, more specifically, the role of the masses of Indian peasants and urban poor, whose demonstrations of resistance have not been celebrated as those of the Indian elite.[104]

Lowe sees that subalternity, for the SSG, poses a real challenge to elitisism in the sense that it portays decloinzation not as a mere struggle between two blocs: national elitists and colonialists. Rather, subalternity, as a mode of thought, celebrates the vital role that the subalterized groups like "peasants" and "urban poor", whose voices and contributions have been denied or rendered unimportant by the dominant classes, play in the anti-colonial struggle. The non-privileged groups, for Lowe, represent important agents of the anti-colonial resistance against British colonialism like those of the national liberation movement. Thus, their important participation in

[101] Stephan Morton, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 48.
[102] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 35.
[103] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 192.
[104] Ibid.

the decolonization process and their stories of Indian history have to be acknowledged and celebrated as those of the elites. In so doing, the subaltern project contests elitist representations for neglecting the roles of essential constituents of Indian society and hence significant parts of Indian history and culture. For this reason, the SSG try to fill what is missing in the dominant historiography by rewriting the history of the Indian independence from the point of view of the insurgent masses.

The stated purpose of subaltern theorists is to "help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work."[105] In other words, they aim to challenge the elitist historiography of colonialist and nationalist writers. In this regard, Guha explicitly attacks the colonial and national narratives for denying legitimacy to the peasant history. He attempts "to refute the colonial stereotype of peasant insurgents as violent fanatics, and the nationalist portrayal of these same insurgent as primitive and superstitious people manipulated by the elite."[106] This means that Guha tries to deconstruct the colonial depiction of peasant insurgency and the nationalist historians' claim that social change has been held by the elites, because the peasant resistance is depicted to have been spontaneously mobilized by another consciousness, by that of the national elites.

What has been said makes it clear that the postcolonial Subaltern Studies play a double subversive cultural role: rectifying the elitist historiography, be it colonial, national or patriarchal, and providing a new version of history from the point of view of the marginalized voices. This means that the SSG work through two interrelated fronts: critique and resistance, deconstruction and reconstruction. In the following passage, Darshan Perusek explains the double aim behind writing history from a point of view of marginality.

> The subaltern historians' re-writing of history has two objectives: (1) The dismantling of elitist historiography by decoding biases and value judgments in records, testimonies, and

[105] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 35.

[106] Annie Paul, *Caribbean Culture: Soundings on Kamau Brathwaite* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2007), p. 249.

narratives of the ruling-classes; (2) The restoration to subaltern groups of their 'agency', their role in history as 'subjects', with an ideology and a political agenda of their own.[107]

The concentration of the subaltern studies theorists on the process of rewriting elitist texts stems from being fully conscious that history has been for a long time written by the ruling classes where achievements are exclusively credited to them, while the roles of the rest are excluded, distorted or, at best, rendered to secondary importance. Thus, they set out to dismantle the accounts of the ruling classes in favor of rebuilding alternative modes of production in which the subaltern voice and agency would be restored and strengthened. In so doing, the subaltern studies theories offer ample possibilities to reread the complexity of power struggle from the position of those who have been distorted and/or muted in the colonial and national representations of Arab history.

Central to the case of retrieving the subaltern histories is the recovery of the subaltern consciousness, because "consciousness is the ground that makes all disclosure possible."[108] In the dominant historiography, subaltern people "are often accused of 'false consciousness' or dismissed for their alleged stupidity and passivity"[109] That is, members of the subaltern project, like Guha and Prakash, accuse colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist modes of historiography of treating the subaltern people of South Asian society as if they lacked consciousness of their own and, consequently, they had no ability to represent their own history.

Although nationalism has successfully contributed to the retrieval of the history and the agency of the colonized nation, it has sometimes replicated the same structures and practices it sought to oppose. It has most probably neglected the cultural particularism of different ethnicities and different religious and political ideologies. Therefore, it has contributed to the silencing of the subalterns rather than giving them the floor to represent themselves and contest the dominant voices that speak on their behalf.

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[107] Darshan Perusek, "Subaltern Consciousness and Historiography of Indian Rebellion of 1857," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 28, no. 37 (Sep. 11, 1993). p. 1935, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4400141>.

[108] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 10.

[109] Keylie Smith, "Gramsci at the Margins: Subjectivity and Subalternity in a Theory of Hegemony," *International Gramsci Journal*, no. 2 (IGJ, 2010), pp. 39-50. Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol1/iss2/7>.

Marxist theorists have also, along with Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Robert Young and other postcolonial critics, championed the histories of the oppressed and their emancipation. But, although Marxists contest both colonial and national historiography, "[they]found it difficult to deal with the hold of "backward" ideologies of caste and religion."[110] That is, their accounts of peasant rebellions overlook the religious and class differences. Thus, their claim to represent the masses remains debatable.

Therefore, the subaltern collective's work helps fill the gap that Marxists left out by advocating various forms of subalternity. As Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it, "subaltern histories will engage philosophically with the questions of difference that are elided in the dominant traditions of Marxism."[111] That is, Subaltern Studies group attempt to revive the histories of the marginalized people whose agency to represent themselves was denied by the historical scholarships and interpretations of colonialists, nationalists and Marxists. To rectify such elitist discourses, "Subaltern Studies announced that its new approach would restore history to the subordinated."[112] This new approach seeks to redress the dominant history through articulating cultural differences.[113] It is on this account that SSG help pave the way for the enunciation of mutual recognition and multiculturalism because they promote the "struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracy."[114]

It would be interesting to elaborate on the contradiction in the work of Subaltern group with respect to the notion of consciousness. In this regard, Gayatri Spivak explains that "there is always a counterpointing suggestion in the work of the group that subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the elite."[115] Spivak's work—which directly echoes that of Gramsci in terms of his argument of the inability of the subaltern to have autonomous consciousness as a group, as mentioned above—has acted to empty the gendered subaltern of her potential to develop independent consciousness on her own, and hence of her ability to articulate her own

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[110] Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 5 (Dec. 1994), p. 1477, < https://doi.org/10.2307/2168385>.

[111] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersy: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 94.

[112] Arif Dirlik, Vinay Bahl, and Peter Gran, *History After the Three Worlds: Post-Eurocentric Historiographies* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), p. 87.

[113] I see that the subaltern studies approach follows the path of poststructural and postmodern theories in terms of the articulation of plurality and multiplicity.

[114] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 97.

[115] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 11.

rights and interests. She writes: "I cannot entirely endorse this insistence of determinate vigor and full autonomy, for practical historiographic exigencies will not allow such endorsements to privilege subaltern consciousness."[116] She debilitates the capability of the subalterns to develop autonomous consciousness outside the elite circle, and she therefore strips them of the power to enunciate their socio-ploitical agency.

In her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak places much emphasis on silencing the subaltern subject by the colonial and patriarchal dominant ideologies, but little attention to the articulation of the subaltern voice and agency. In other words, she focuses on the subaltern subjects as powerless victim of external forces rather than as powerful agents who are consciously aware of their oppression and capable of resisting it and then effectuating a purposeful change. Furthermore, it seems to me that Spivak's analysis of *sati*—a widow's ritual self-immolation on her husband death in the Indian context—does not give vent to the emergence of oppositional political consciousness on the part of the subaltern subject. In this essay, Spivak comes to the conclusion that "the subaltern cannot speak,"[117] since "there is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak."[118] In short, Spivak sees that the subaltern cannot speak because of being doubly muted and rendered invisible by the combined epistemic violence of colonialism and patriarchy and their situations are often exacerbated by the Western and national elitists' sympathetic presumptions to speak for them; hence, she is incapable to recourse to any form of agency.

Unlike Spivak, Guha focuses on the subaltern consciousness by which the insurgent classes can restore the autonomy and agency denied by the dominant historiography. In his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Guha argues that the recovery of the subaltern histories and the comprehensive reversal of the world's power relations cannot be simply effectuated by a re-narration of the past events but by showing the awareness and consciousness of the subaltern subjects in making such histories.[119] He expounds: "Yet we propose to focus on this consciousness as our central theme because it is not possible to make the sense of the

[116] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 271.

[117] Rosalind C. Morris, *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 257.

[118] Ibid., p. 281.

[119] Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 336-337.

experience of the insurgency merely as a history of events without a subject."[120] Here, Guha argues that recovering subaltern histories is not simply a re-narration of the past events but showing the awareness and consciousness of the subaltern subjects in making such histories.

In a similar vein, other subaltern studies theorists like Rosalind O'Hanlon, Partha Chatterjee, and Kamala Visweswaran, among others share with Guha the idea that the making of absence into presence is essentially effectuated by the recuperation of the subaltern as a conscious human subject rather than as a blind follower of any elite. For example, O'Hanlon attacks the elitist historiography in its three forms: colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist, for treating the subalternized people of south Asian society as if they had no consciousness of their own, and hence no ability to articulate their own history.[121] Chatterjee also argues that the subalterns have been excluded in the representations of the totalizing ideologies on the assumption that they lack consciousness and thus qualifications to be free. Thus, from the elitists' view, they have to be represented and spoken for.[122] In response to such historiographical orthodoxies, Chatterjee stresses that the task of the subaltern studies now is "to fill up this emptiness, that is, the representation of subaltern consciousness in elitist historiography,"[123] in order to make the subaltern an active player of real history.

Following on from the epistemology of the Subaltern Studies Group, I will endeavour to support my argument that the forms of resistance articulated by the marginalized subjects in the films under study seek to rectify hegemonic discourses and thus articulate the culture of mutual recognition from the point of view of those who have suffered the effects of the one-sided recognition. Moreover, building on Guha's idea of the subaltern consciousness, which he shares with others, I argue that the disregarded subjects in the films in question are aware of the conditions of their oppression and they consciously set out to challenge such domination. For example, the film *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000) deals with the issue of anti-colonial resistance, though colonialism had formally ended in 1956. Yet, the purpose is, on the one hand, to demystify the "civilizing missions" French colonialism claims to have brought to Morocco and to rectify the

[120] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 20.

[121] Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies*, 22 (1), 1988, p. 192. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00009471>.

[122] Partha Chatterjee, "Peasants, Politics and Historiography: A Response," *Social Scientist*, 11(5), 1983, p. 62. 58–65, https://doi.org/10.2307/3517104 (Accessed 25/06/2014).

[123] Ibid.

distortion of the colonial representations of Morocco. On the other hand, this film tries to make it clear that anti-colonial resistance has encompassed multiplicity of voices; the individuals like Moh and his uncle Zayd and women like Moh's mother and wife—who do not belong to the nationalist movement—are represented to form essential elements of such resistance. In so doing, the film brings to the surface other important agents that have participated in the anti-colonial struggle. In this regard, the film recovers the marginalized voices that have been muted in the elitist representation, be it colonial or national. It paves the way for recognizing and celebrating the marginalized Moroccan subjects as similar as possible to those of the Moroccan elites. Furthermore, the subalternized struggle for liberation is clearly depicted as a result of their own religious and social self-consciousness rather than of being mobilized by the national elites. That is, the film shows that the individuals who participate in the anti-colonial resistance are not driven by the national elitists' speech but rather by the oppressive experiences of colonialism.

Therefore, contrary to Spivak's conclusion, this study attempts to prove that the subalterns in the films under study do speak. For example, in the anti-colonial film *'Atach* that has been recently mentioned, the colonized get their voices heard through blowing out the water pumps of the colonizers. This act puts more pressure on the colonizer and forces him to leave the country. Moreover, they manage to articulate their subjectivity even in the prison cell. They turn the prison to a "university" where we see them organizing the anti-colonial movements and planning to react to their oppressor. By the same token, the film *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention) challenges the cultural erasure of the repressed past through delving into a journey backwards whereby the film's protagonist, Mokhtar Alyouni, retrieves his imprisoned memory and symbolically the political archive of the so-called 'lead years'. The filmmaker uses the strategy of remembering as a powerful tool for resisting the practices of oppression. It seems as if only by moving backwards could a new ideology be established—an ideology that embodies the dire need for the politics of reconciliation and mutual recognition. Following the same style, Hamid Zoughi's *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal 2008), rectifies the dominant stereotypes about Moroccan shikhat and acknowledges their linguistic and political capacities in subverting hegemony. That is, it (re)presents them as powerful social agents in the socio-political and cultural changes of Moroccan society.

The idea of resistance being stemmed from the subalternized subjects' consciousness of the conditions of their oppression seems almost, although to varying degrees, applicable to all the

films under analysis. For instance, in the Egyptian film *Alexandria . . . New York*, the protagonist Yahya becomes, through a journey of self-discovery, aware of the racial American attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims. He reveals that the American claim of democracy and freedom looks like a cover which hides within it many atrocities. Having been conscious of the American hostility and racism towards the Arab world, which is symbolically communicated through his young American son's refusal to accept him as a father simply because he is an Arab, the Egyptian protagonist suggests that the Arab world has to break relation with the United States as a tactical response to its racist and imperialist politics. This suggestion is symbolically conveyed through the protagonist's decision to break relation with his American son, who serves in the film as a mouthpiece of American imperialism, so as to regain his self-worth and dignity. The film *Chaos* also illustrates that the demonstrations of the Egyptian masses stems from their awareness of corruption and dictatorship of the authoritarian regime represented by the police officer Hatem.

In a similar vein, the Yemeni films under analysis prove that the marginalized subjects cannot be frozen within the state of submissiveness. For example, the film *I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced* (2014) deconstructs the image of woman and child as deficient since the female child's thinking appears to be more operative, productive and effective. In so doing, the film resists the mainstream culture that speaks in the name of the whole and reduces the cognitive abilities of significant elements of the society. Another Yemeni film that disproves the dominant idea of child as deficient is *Yearning* (Hanin, 2013), though it is not included in the case analysis of this study because it is a short film. In this film, the two orphaned children are seen cleverly coping with the exploitation of their uncle and his wife who try to deprive them from schooling. The male child strives hardly to get an income that enables them to follow their study. They are seen aware of being exploited by their uncle and his wife, and they, consequently, looks for ways by which they can impose their recognition. The film represents children not as deficient, but as creative, and capable to be financially independent.

Seen in this light, I would argue that the subaltern approach opens up ample avenues to analyze the complexity of resistance in Arab cinema. Equally important, it helps bridge the gaps in the representation of the subaltern subject in the colonialist and nationalist and patriarchal accounts. In reading the films under study from the subaltern perspective, a reader might come to realize how the subaltern concerns and histories are articulated outside the state-centered national

discourse, which might replicate colonial paradigms in a world of globalization. These films are assumed to search for the repressed or forgotten hi(story) such as exploring the multifaceted aspects of anti-colonial resistance, evoking the stories of political incarceration, disproving the stereotypes inflicted on women and children, problematizing the issue of fundamentalism, bridging the gaps based on fixed understanding of identity or redefining the current present through recognizing the migrants' alienation; hence, the objective behind the process of writing history from a position of subalternity are arguably to create culture of mutual recognition that are characteristic of equal citizenship and human democracy.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the postcolonial theoretical perspectives upon which this study relies. It has examined how a word functions as a double-edged sword through tracing its vital role in the colonial and decolonial spaces. However, the political force of cultural resistance has been addressed from a variety of perspectives. For example, the post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault draws insight into the inseparable relationship between power and resistance, which has widely resonated in postcolonial studies. Nevertheless, his paradigm of the dialectic of power relation appears to avoid any serious consideration of resistance or liberation because he imprisons his idea of resistance within the individual's struggle to get his/her problems solved. For this reason, Edward Said has carried out harsh attack on him for his theoretical oversight of the imperial experience and the history of colonialist practice as well as for his neglect of the considerable flow of oppositional culture and literature. Although Said has consistently drawn on Foucault's work for understanding the power enacted through knowledge and for analyzing literary and media texts within the frame of discursive formation, he has done substantial adjustment in vision and understanding to reconsider the political efficacy of postcolonial writings. Following the same logic, Barbara Harlow emphasizes the political potential of resistant literature in confronting the discourses and practices of oppression on many levels and in many arenas.

In pursuit of the cogent route of the postcolonial theorists' intriguing compassion for the oppressed, it has been seen that Frantz Fanon's approach to resistance takes in main the shape of violence; he endorses revolutionary violence as the only effective means in the decolonization

struggle in which other means prove to be futile. Fanon highlights the role of violence in curing the colonized individuals from their inferiority complex and in enabling reunification among the masses. Nevertheless, his theory of resistance cannot be framed within the form indicated by violence, as detailed in the second section of this chapter. Although Said justifies Fanon's embrace of armed resistance, he appears to rest much faith in the potential of the cultural flow of the oppositional knowledge to challenge and change the cultural imperialism. Both Fanon and Said have in different ways contributed to overturning the Western domination. However, they still have a few epistemological blind spots—like generalization or oversight of some aspects of resistance—for which they have been criticized. The fourth section of this chapter has shown how the Subaltern Studies theorists have filled the gap left in the knowledge of national elitists, Marxists and some postcolonial theorists by foregrounding a more inclusive paradigm of knowledge, which respond to diverse forms of subalternity. But, what remains debatable among the Subaltern Studies Group is the question of subalternized consciousness. While Gayatri Spivak argues, in a generalized way, that the subalterns are unable to recuperate an autonomous consciousness on their own, Guha, Chatterjee, O'Hanlon and Visweswaran go in the opposite direction.

Drawing on film studies and postcolonial theories, the analytical part is devoted to providing a comprehensive analysis of nine films chosen carefully from Egypt, Morocco and Yemen to represent multidimensional aspects of resistance. It tries to answer the following interrelated questions: How is resistance enunciated in the contemporary Arab films? And how do Arab cinema(s) respond to the experience of oppression shaped by colonialism, neocolonialism, Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, injustice and corruption as well as class, gender, regional, racial and sectarian distinctions, among others? This will be examined in detail in the following part, which is divided into three chapters. All of them try to prove the argument that the various forms of resistance raised in the films under analysis are politically oriented to create the culture of recognition and multiculturalism.

PART II: CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 1: Resistance in Contemporary Egyptian Cinema: Unearthing and Undermining Americentrism, Authoritarianism and Patriarchal Capitalism

Introduction

It has been emphasized in the theoretical part that the filmic art can never be detached from the culture that secretes it and from the context from which it emerges. The interplay between text and context, between aesthetics and politics, forms a solid ground upon which my argument is based. The artistic features help a film director to communicate his/her socio-political visions in aesthetic manner full of symbols and significations. This creates an interest in exploring cultural resistance in such multiple mode of expression that has representational capacities by both its own internal characteristics and its literary and theatrical adaptation. The pleasure of the cinematic text stems primarily from being implicated in political contexts. Hence, the films under study are going to be analyzed within the frame of power relation so as to unveil the political function embedded in the film form and content.

Guided by the theoretical framework of film studies and postcolonial theories upon which my analysis of the films under study is based, this chapter examines the representations of resistance in Egyptian cinema through a form and content analysis of three films: Youssef Chahine's two films *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004) and *Hiya Fawada* (Chaos, 2007) and Mohamed Khan's *Fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl, 2014). This chapter is devoted to answering this main question: How do the mechanisms of power and the dialectics of resistance interact in the Egyptian contemporary filmic discourse? The answer to this question is going to be discussed through a detailed analysis of the subsequent questions: How do the Egyptian contemporary films respond to the issues of Euro-Americentric and ethnocentric historicizing? What are the visions Arab film directors have provided to get out from the dilemma of corruption and chaos? Is national or religious consciousness adequate to cope with such crisis or is it necessary to transcend that to social and human consciousness? What are the roles the lower-working women can play in the process of social reforms? Then if it is necessary to go beyond racial, national, religious and class consciousness, the questions are: What are the pitfalls of such kinds of consciousness and how do the films under study treat those who become

shrouded within the seemingly narrow frames of consciousness? These questions will be examined through a comprehensive analysis of the three above-mentioned films. My analysis of each film begins with a brief overview of the director's artistic career and a synopsis of the film's plot in relation to the idea of resistance.

1.1. "Unthinking"[1] Americentrism in Chahine's *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York, 2004)

Youssef Chahine is one of the most prolific Egyptian and Arab film directors. In his filmmaking career spanning nearly six decades, Chahine captures many facets of the socio-political, historical and cultural struggles specific to colonial and postcolonial conditions.[2] He is seemingly unique "for his mastery of cinematic style, the diversity of his range, and his wide appeal both to the intelligentsia and the masses,"[3] and, to add, for his iconoclastic vision. With breadth of insight, he problematizes a wide range of oppressive and exploitative relations and paves the way for justice-based alternatives. The colonial and neocolonial, capitalist, national, religious and patriarchal predicaments are among the subject-matters examined in his films. He made his directorial debut with *Baba Amin* (Father Amin, 1950), a feature film fluctuates between fantasy and reality to show how greediness for money can lead one to be a victim of illusory projects and economic exploitation.[4] But, it was his next directorial transformations that have propelled him to the forefront of Arab directors and gained him acclaim in the international film festivals and art houses. His two final films *Alexandria . . . New York* (2004) and *Chaos* (2007) came as a culmination of his long-standing experience and counter-hegemonic efforts devoted at large to paving the way for the culture of mutual recognition.

[1] The term "Unthinking" is taken from Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's foregrounding book *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* in which they unearth, critique and transcend the fallacies and tropes of the Eurocentric epistemology and historiography. For further information, see Chapter I, section 3 of this dissertation, pp. 66-67.

[2] See Khouri, *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema*, the Introduction.

[3] Youssef Chahine and Joseph Massad, "Art and Politics in the Cinema of Youssef Chahine," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1999, pp. 77–93. https://doi.org/10.2307/2537936 (Accessed 25 April 2016).

[4] In this film, Chahine seems to have succumbed to the commercial trend dominating such period because he incorporates dance, music and comedy so as to appeal to the taste of the audience. He also locates the exploitative relations between the protagonists and antagonists in the terrain between fantasy and reality. See Youssef Chahine (dir.), *Baba Amin* (Father Amin), Cairo information office, 1950.

Alexandria . . . New York is an autobiographical account of Chahine's conflicting relationship with America as a metropolitan Arab figure whose upbringing and education have been open to the celebration of cultural diversities. Through a self-critical story, Chahine, played by Yahya Shokry, features how his dream of America fifty years earlier turns gradually to disillusionment. The film goes back and forth to trace his long trajectory of identification with the United States since he has joined theatre and expressive dance at the Pasadena Playhouse till he becomes a reputed international film director. At the earlier stage of his academic journey, Yahya/Chahine seems to have perceived America as more alluring than threatening. This is symbolized through a story of requited love between Yahya, a low-middle class Egyptian boy, and Ginger, an American female colleague from an aristocratic family. However, he now shows a lot of anger towards the new generation for being massively swallowed by racism and driven by capitalist and imperialist ideologies. Upon his return to the New York Film Festival held in his honor, he runs into his presumed first girlfriend Ginger. Ginger tells him that he had fathered a son by her named Alexander who is now the principal dancer in the New York City Ballet. To his disappointment, his son rejects to acknowledge him as a father despite all overtures of reconciliation, simply because he is an Arab. Thus, his dream of establishing balanced relationships with America has now shattered.

The film is dedicated to the foregrounding postcolonial critic Edward Said, along with the famous Egyptian musician Kamal al-Tawil, whose critique of Orientalism and resistance to the Eurocentric historicizing through what he calls "writing back" seem to pervade the whole film. As the credits come across the screen, a song sung by the famous Egyptian singer Ali al-Hajjar is included to introduce the viewer to a pilgrimage of pain and hope. In correspondence to Said's intellectual attempts to change the rigid binary demarcations, the song, on the one hand, carries out harsh criticism and denunciation of the cultural practices that incite dichotomous relationships or keeps people out of touch with each other. Such practices are compared to "darkness", "barriers", and "imprisonment." The song implicitly laments the crisis of the Arab migrant's exile in America where the artificial sun is not beaming cultural recognition and reconciliation, but rather exclusion and racism. On the other hand, the words and music of the song offers spaces of hope and reconciliation. This song commences and concludes with promoting the possibility of being the Self and the Other at the same time, provided that we understand differences as a matter of reciprocal enrichment. However, the concluding song of the

film ends depicting the director's disappointment to bring the relationship between America and the Arab world into the point of mutuality. The final song ends with the words "New York kills any tenderness."[5]

The opening scene after the credits and song shows a debate between Yahya and his old intellectual friend Adib about the American stance of Egypt and the Arab world. Adib reveals that America has withdrawn its promised offer to build the Aswan High Dam. Yahya compares the American refusal to finance the Dam to the rejection of the American Fox Film Company to fund one of his films. The politics of American capitalism unfold, here, in the attempts to have monopoly over economic and cultural productions. Yahya is seen, however, incomprehensible with respect to the American withdrawal to fund a showpiece project like the High Dam because he has already created some positive impressions of America. Thus, he declares that he could not hate them as an indication of his fluctuating stance.

To refute the illusion of the American Dream—the dream of America as a land of equality, liberty and upper mobility—upon which Yahya has established his impressions and optimism, Adib argues that such image is a mere myth created in Hollywood. This discussion takes place in the café of the Cairo train station where the viewer is initially introduced to a group of Egyptian recruits crowding into the train as a painful reminder of the triple aggression against Egypt.[6] This shows how such incidence has contributed to the development of Chahine's ambitiously critical consciousness.

The film abruptly cuts to the next discussion taking place in the editing room in which Yahya's conflicting vision about America continues to be questioned. Yahya's fascination with America seems to have been based on uncritical consumption. The myth of American values embodied in Hollywood films might prompt him to think that it was the United States that made an end of the triple aggression against Egypt. With anger written on his face and read in the gestures of his hands, Adib asks Yahya to rectify his "false consciousness", to borrow Marxian terminology, saying: "What is this nonsense? It was the Soviet warning that forced them to cease the war. America is going to be confusing to you. You have to define your stance." [7] He

[5] Youssef Chahine, *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York), Misr International Films, 2004.

[6] The triple aggression is a military action taken against Egypt by the undercover alliance of Israel, Britain and France in 1956.

[7] Chahine, *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York).

concludes with these asserting remarks: "America is a colonial power that is one hundred times dirtier than the old colonialism."[8]

The conception Yahya had formed about America several years earlier has gradually changed through a set of cultural encounters, which seems to mark a definite shift in his position. The next scene directly moves to scrutinize Yahya's disillusionment with the prescribed image he has previously held about America. In his interview with a close Jewish friend who works in the film industry, Yahya is seen discussing the possibility of screening his film *The people and the Nile* (1968) in American film festivals. However, his friend alters his naïve perception of America as a space open to difference and celebration of the Other. He states: "You are ignorant to think that the Americans are going to accept screening a film praising Nasser."[9] This encounter provides Yahya with an opportunity to test his oversimplified assumption of America as a land of freedom. He engages in a sophisticated argumentation with his Jewish friend:

> YAHYA. Why not? First, a free community like America is supposed to accept all opinions. Second, what does actually concern is the film level. Third, the film talks about the marginalized and the Nile and not about glorifying Nasser . . .
> HIS JEWISH FRIEND. Yahya! Your films have become internationally recognized. That's enough. I really appreciate you. But, you know that this profession is almost exclusive to Jews who neither like Arab nor Nasser.[10]

This conversation lays bare how American capitalism does not allow the different Other to take away its monopoly over the system of representation. In this vein, capitalism might ruin the careers of the marginalized individuals no matter of how creative and proficient they are in favor of the capitalist entrepreneurs. That is, as a capitalist system, America looks at cinema as a business enterprise rather than as an expressive art that can enrich human communication. To his somewhat disappointment, Yahya discovers that the finance and screening of his films are recurrently refused not because of objective evaluation, but because of racial attitudes, for being an Arab. Here, the film, in agreement with the Marxist viewpoint, discusses racism in relation to capitalism to show how American capitalist economy is crucially operated by racism.

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

Although Yahya differentiates between Judaism and Zionism, his Jewish friend homogenizes Arabs within a single essential entity and shows his racist feelings towards them, saying: "I am non-Zionist Jew, but if you make me choose between Arab and Nasser or Israel, I will definitely choose Israel." [11] Yahya's cultural encounter with his Jewish friend makes him realize the American capitalist orientation and its interrelated racist policy that pushes it to openly stand at the side of the Israeli occupation. In so doing, the film, on the one hand, condemns racial and national chauvinism, which might turn a today close friend into a future enemy. On the other hand, it draws attention to the importance of cultural encounter as an embattled site of identification and reconsideration of one's presumptions and hence positions.

The camera takes us to the present time to show how the hope Yahya placed in America several years earlier has now shattered. In an effective scene, the camera comes close to detect his anger and sadness while he is watching a television broadcast of a Palestinian demonstration dispersed with arrests and bloodshed by Israeli soldiers. To highlight the Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians, the scene presents an image of a child hysterically screaming for his father who is killed by the Israeli forces. Resented by the American involvement in what is happening to the Palestinians, Yahya instantly picks up the phone and calls his assistant May to cancel his ticket to New York. He tells the members of his team that he would have no dignity if he accepted to be honored by the Americans. For Yahya/Chahine, America cannot help kill and oppress the Palestinians without feeling the effects of its unjust policy. The members of his team shares the same resentment towards the American's unlimited support of Israel, but they see that screening his films in New York represents an opportunity to wrest back the American monopoly over cultural productions and to provide an alternative vision of the Arab world, particularly that "the viewers might exceed forty thousand,"[12] as one of them states. On this basis, Yahya recognizes the importance of the cultural encounter as a site of resistance through which his voice as an Arab could be articulated. As Edward Said stresses in *Culture and Imperialism*, the production, and to add circulation, of postcolonial texts help counteract and undermine the cultural accounts of imperialism.

In an aerial shot, the camera is tracking around the Statue of Liberty in a semicircular movement as a welcoming sight to the newcomer to the land of "plurality" and "freedom". At

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

the closing scene of his previous film *al-Iskandariyya . . . Lih* (Alexandaria … Why?, 1978), Chahine projects the Statue of Liberty as a toothless, laughing woman who is seemingly mocking at the dreams of immigrants and their naïve vision of America.[13] In the current film under analysis, Chahine is going to examine the vague image of America evoked in his earlier film. In this regard, when the camera moves away to record the first meeting between Yahya and the organizing committee of the New York Film Festival, the viewer is given a hint of the contradiction between what is propagated in American media and what is experienced in reality. The committee members tell him at first that they do not get hold of his films. "Are you sure you have submitted your films?",[14] the head of the organizing committee asks. Yahya resents being disrespectfully viewed through the filter of stereotypes. He angrily responds: "Do you think we are backward? We are well aware of the importance of the festival."[15] Here, Chahine may be trying to convey that although his films have gained international acclaim and won awards at various film festivals, the dominant American point of view still categorizes him within the frame of the backward Orient.

The film then smoothly opens the door for exploring America from within. The camera introduces us to the first dialogue between Ginger who symbolizes the voice of human conscience and her son Alexander who acts as a mouthpiece of the American imperialism. In this dialogue, Alexander is seen saturated with racism and stereotypes towards Arabs. His mother is shown persuading him to attend the film screening held in honor of an internationally recognized Arab director who turns later to be his father. But, her son is seen mocking at the creative capacity of the director whom he perceives as unknown and whose country, for him, is not registered on the map. However, his mother bets that her son could check his mind when he sees the film. She looks at art as a human property. Thus, she thinks that it could have the potential to bridge the distance between the American ballet dancer Alexander and the Arab film director Yahya. The camera, in arc shot, spins around Ginger and her son in a circular pattern to map the surrounding billboards advertising the film festival held in honor of the director whom Alexander considers as unknown. This shot is associated with a conversation between Ginger and her son as representatives of two generations with two contrasting visions towards the Other.

[13] See Youssef Chahine (dir.), *Iskandariyya . . . Lih?* (Alexandria . . . Why?), Misr International Films, 1978.

[14] Chahine, *Iskandariyya . . . New York* (Alexandria . . . New York).

[15] Ibid.

The former is seen celebrating the artistic supremacy of the director apart from his racial or religious belonging, whereas the latter is shown stressing that there is no artistic or intellectual supremacy outside his race and religion.

In two extreme close-ups captured before and during the screening, the camera registers the shift of Alexander's reaction towards the film. In the former shot, he is seen threating his mother that he would leave the festival if he got boring. His facial expression and his sharp tone mirror his reduction of the artistic capacity of the Arab film director. By contrast, in the latter shot, he is shown solely captivated and deeply touched by such an engrossing and poignant film. Furthermore, after the screening, the director is applauded by the whole audience for minutes. Here, Yahya/Chahine attempts to cure the superiority complex of those who imagine artistry and creativity to be exclusive to specific race or bound by geographical, racial, religious or any other constructed border. Nevertheless, the potential of art to articulate the culture of recognition and reconciliation in a context intensified with racism and oriented by imperialism seems to be exceedingly difficult, if not quite impossible, unless racial and ethnocentric consciousness is transformed into human consciousness.

Yahya continues presenting some of the Eurocentric positions he has encountered in America and how he has faced them. In a press conference following the screening of his film, an American journalist is seen harshly attacking him for his criticism of the United States in newspapers, accusing him of hindering human communication. What seems contradictory is that Yahya's criticism of the miserable conditions of the Egyptian working class in his recently screened film *Bab al-Hadid* (Cairo Station, 1958) has been favorably welcome by the white man, while his condemnation of the unjust American practices is conceptualized as a threat to the cross-cultural interaction. Thus, Yahya, in response, mocks at the claim of American democracy. He ironically states: "America should be an exception!"[16] He proclaims that the American people are supposed to be free and hold responsibility for the imperial acts the regime adopt against the Arab world in general and the Palestinian nation in particular. The discussion unveils that the notion of pan-Arab nationalism or, to talk accurately, pan-justice solidarity represents a real threat to the imperial projects. The American interlocutor responds: "You are Egyptian. And Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel. Why do you get yourself involved in the battles of

[16] Ibid.

Arabs?"[17] Yahya, here, does not resist racism with counter-racism. Rather, he points out that his position is driven by his thirst for social justice and is by no means grounded on racist or chauvinistic background.

In this regard, Yahya brings to light his cosmopolitan upbringing and education in Alexandria as a space of cultural tolerance and co-existence among multi ethnicities and identities. To evidence his anti-racist orientation, he introduces three of his colleagues whom he has never met since they were students in the Victoria University of Alexandria. Upon reading the news of the film festival held in honor of his films, they insist on attending the screening in order to meet him and share with him the feelings of happiness, although they belong to different ethnicities, religions and countries. The third friend he mentions is a Jewish woman who then fell in love with her and tried to marry her, but his family refused not because she is Jewish, but because he was still twelve years old. In this context, Yahya/Chahine connotes that his championing with the oppressed Palestinians does not stem from narrow-racist motives, but from the justice of their cause. He also proves that relationships defy being bound by fixed borders such as race, religion, class, skinned-color and gender.

The racial discrimination that some Americans show against Arab as a race pushes the protagonist Yahya to delve into a comparison between America, which is claimed to be a model for freedom and plurality, and Egypt, which is depicted in the Western media as a space of confinement and homogeneity. He demonstrates that there have been about three hundred thousand Jews living in harmony with twelve ethnicities in Alexandria. Later in the film, the director presents a scene of a dialogue between Alexander and his teacher in which the latter consolidates the image of Alexandria as a space of cultural and religious tolerance and coexistence. The teacher shows his resentment against Alexander's racism, expressing that New York was aspiring to compete with Alexandria at the levels of "culture, love and tolerance,"[18] as the American teacher states. As an American Jew who was living in Poland, this teacher narrates that the period in which Jews were being oppressed in Europe, the Jews in Egypt, by contrast, were living in the utmost security. In so doing, the film director disproves the Orientalist construction of Arab as closed totalitarian through counter-narratives voiced by Yahya and reinforced by the American teacher; therefore, he plays the role of cognitive therapist in the

[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

sense that he tries to heal those who are sick with racism and dogmatism through pointing out the advantages of the anti-racist discourse. In this regard, Chahine goes in line with the groundbreaking authors of *Culture and Imperialism* and *Unthinking Eurocentrism* who devote much emphasize to the importance of the counter-telling in the decolonization process.

It is worth mentioning to reiterate that Yahya's position in relation to the United States has been ambivalent. Such ambivalence results from the political and cultural shift that the United States has been witnessing since he was a student in New York sixty years earlier and up to now. To delineate such shift, the film's narrative moves frequently back and forth between the past and present to convey how his past dream of America turns now into disillusionment. In this regard, the film embarks on a journey back to chronicle Yahya's memory of the United States. In this journey, America is first presumed to be more alluring than threatening. This is best illustrated by the love relationship between Yahya, an Egyptian young boy from low-middle class background, and Ginger, an American young lady from aristocratic family. His relationship with Ginger symbolizes his earlier perception of America as a space more open to peace and celebration of cultural differences. Such perception has been consolidated by being warmly celebrated by his teachers and the dean of the institute of Pasadena for his scientific supremacy over all his Western counterpart colleagues. Most of his teachers are almost seen treating him on equal foot.

Being lured by the bright side of America does not blind him from seeing the dark one. Through a series of flashback, he (Yahya) records the racist and stereotypic practices he had earlier experienced in America. For example, the female guard of the Hollywood studios is seen refusing to let him get in while allowing his American counterparts simply because he is an Arab. She discriminately addresses him: "This is not an agency for refugees."[19] The next day, his female teacher takes him, along with Ginger, with her, but she orders him to disappear into her car so as to help him pass the checkpoint. In the Studio scene, the photographer is shown rejecting to give him information about the operation of the camera, saying: "This is the secret of the profession."[20] When Yahya tries to curiously explore how it works, the photographer expels him out. He is also seen facing stereotypes leveled at, for example, by the female landlord of the house where he lives and by some of his colleagues who perceive him as backward and

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

uncivilized. In so doing, the director elicits our sympathy for a struggle against racism and Eurocentrism in which people warrant respect on essentialist grounds.

The cosmopolitan boy who comes from a place depicted by Western media as a space of either threat or backwardness proves, however, to be more open and supreme. He approaches cultural differences not as a site to construct binary opposition, but rather as a contact zone for fostering reciprocal enrichment. He also conceives art as a human property in which pioneering and supremacy defy the socially constructed borders. Besides obtaining the highest degrees in all subjects throughout the history of the institute, as the dean of the institute proclaims, the multitalented Oriental demonstrates to have outstanding experience in theatrical performance and expressive dance. In his brilliant performance of the role of Hamlet, Yahya proves that he, as an Arab, could understand the feelings, senses, hesitation and puzzlement of Hamlet better than his Western counterparts. The camera, in close-up shots, records the excitement Yahya rouses in the audience, including his female teacher and his lover. His lover candidly acknowledges his artistic talent, saying: "This is the one who deserves to play the role of Hamlet."[21] His skillful performance of the expressive dance using the opera music he declares to have acquired in the Victoria University in Alexandria also refutes the stereotypes that homogenize the Orient or reduce it to a mere classical folklore or archeological collections lacking any feature of dynamism and creativity. He brings to the fore the cultural legacy of Alexandria as a space of artistic and intellectual inspiration.

By contrast, Yahya rebukes the dangerous regression America has been increasingly witnessing with respect to the issues of freedom, independence and democracy towards Arabs and Muslims. In today America, the racist and stereotypic practices exercised against Arab are depicted to be sharper and more harmful that they were in the early 1940s. This goes in line with Edward Said's idea that the American contribution to the history of Orientalism before World War II was limited. This means that temporality does matter in the representation of the American position towards the Arab world and vice versa. It is on the account of such risky shift that Yahya shows a lot of anger to the contemporary America.

Upon his current visit to America, Yahya is reunited with his lover Ginger who tells him, through a flashback, that he had fathered a son by her during his last visit to New York some twenty-five years ago. She also reveals that their son, whom she named Alexander, is now the

[21] Ibid.

leading dancer in the New York City Ballet. Yahya appears so happy with the idea of having a son that his hands are seen shaking in excitement. He also celebrates his son's artistic supremacy. This signifies that he, as an Arab, dreams of establishing reciprocally interdependent relationship with the United States away from the dialectics of domination and subordination.

However, Yahya's dream is frustrated by his son's refusal to be fathered by an Arab. Although his son realizes the highly artistic status of his Arab father, he sees him unworthy of reciprocity. When his mother discloses to him that the Arab film director is his father, he, in sharp tone, invokes his superior dynasty, nationality and Jewish background. He also brings back the imagery forged about Arab in American popular culture as backward, camel burg and desert Bedouin. His mother, in return, tries to change his racist and stereotypic preconceptions of the Other. She first tells him that his father is "one of the most prolific Arab film directors."[22] Second, she gets him to know that his father does not identify with people on racist or chauvinistic background, since he has close friends who belong to different ethnicities and countries, among them American Jews. Third, she reproaches him for still being uninformed about the fact that his father descends from a well-educated family whose consciousness obviously unfolds in dispatching him to study in the most prestigious institute in California. Nevertheless, her attempts to have him reciprocate his father's immense affection for him end hitherto in failure.

In his attempts to represent the politics of Othering to which Arabs are exposed in the West and the American increasing hegemony over the Arab world, the filmmaker shows that Alexander turns a deaf ear to various overtures of reconciliation. For instance, his fiancée persuades him to acknowledge his father and be proud of him. But, Alexander is seen imprisoned within the confines of his racist attitudes. He angrily replies to his fiancée that he cannot recognize Yahya as his father simply because he is an Arab. His rigid perception of his identity as unitary, pure and hence superior imprisons him within the shackles of racism and ethnocentrism. In response, his fiancée provokes the idea of his identity as hybrid,[23] saying: "We just now discover that you are half an Arab. Do you think my love for you can decrease for this reason? I love you apart of your race or blood." She also tells him that she is not a pure

[22] Ibid.

[23] The notion of hybridity is also manifest at the level of the film style. The film is fused with music, song, dance and theatrical performance. This diverse style proves that the film art is not to be considered as pure and so does human identity.

American as her dynasty refers to the Red Indians. Here, she emphasizes that America as an immigrant settler community is a myriad of many ethnicities and cultures. In so doing, the film director introduces us into a battle between "advocates of a unitary identity and those who see the whole as a complex but not reductively unified one."[24] Through the presentation of these two pitting perspectives, the director gets the spectator to identify with the second perspective because Alexander's fixed perception of his identity presents a thorny challenge to all attempts of reconciliation with his Arab father.

Although their phenotypic features seem to be quite similar, as the flashbacks show and as Alexander's mother confirms, and so do their artistic interests, Yahya and his son Alexander enormously differ in terms of political and cultural perception of the world. Yahya seems to conceptualize "East" and "West" as "fictional construct[s] embroidered with myths and fantasies."[25] So, we see him, in figure (1a), warmly embracing his American son Alexander with a big hug. Yahya's perception of the world as what Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zone"[26] in which relationship is not intrinsically given, but shaped and reshaped through an unending process of identification, as Stuart Hall argues, offers him an opportunity to celebrate having an American son. This symbolizes his celebration of cultural diversity and his understanding of cultural differences as a space of reciprocal enrichment.

Figure 1a & b. Non-reciprocal embrace between the Egyptian father and his American son (Chahine, *Alexanderia ... New York*, 2004).

[24] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxv.
[25] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 13.
[26] See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8.

Instead of reciprocating his father's affection, Alexander put his own hands at his back as an indication of his refusal to acknowledge being fathered by an Arab. Driven by the Eurocentric culture, he is shown pushing his father forward as seen in figure (1b). This signifies that Alexander, in contrast to his father, perceives the world from Eurocentric perspective in which power and knowledge are centered in the West. That is, his Eurocentric eye "envisions the world from a single privileged point,"[27] as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam put it. Thus, it is difficult for him, if impossible, to recognize or mutually coexist with what he perceives as a matrix of backwardness, alienation and inferiority.

Alexander's refusal to accept being fathered by an Arab is stressed throughout the film. However, his last meeting with his Arab father symbolically unveils the most radical version of the American racism and imperialism. In this meeting, Alexander comes to his father to announce his dishonor and refusal to be fathered by him as a symbol of the American rejection to have a reciprocal relationship or racial equality with what they perceive as the unprivileged and disfavored Arabs. More strikingly, Alexander perceives civilization as accumulation of military power by which America could enforce its hegemony over all countries and regions abroad and the minorities at home. It is on this account that the director illustrates how America becomes more threatening than alluring.

In response to his son's arrogantly racial and imperial mindsets, Yahya expresses his rejection to father a son whom he considers as a waste of American colonialism. He severely condemns his son for being blinded to the fact that American chauvinism has fueled human antagonism through a series of vehement practices beginning with Hiroshima and ending with a construction of bigoted and racist characters like him. Unlike Alexander, Yahya perceives civilization in terms of philosophy, art, and human sciences, because the power enforced through military force, for him, is short living. He answers back to his son's imperial vision by illustrating the fact that people still remember philosophers, artists and sociologists as the historical embodiments of human civilization, while registering colonizers at the darkest record of history. In so doing, Yahya/Chahine, in compatible with Shohat and Stam, critiques Eurocentrism and provides multiculturalism as a counter hegemonic alternative.

[27] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 2.

To conclude, Chahine admits that America has so far been confusing to him and, symbolically, to the Arab world. However, after a long journey of identification, he has been impelled to rethink his viewpoint. What has been represented in Hollywood as a land of liberty and upper mobility turns in the film into a space of racism and cultural exclusion. Thus, he provides a harsh critique of America as a historically oppressive system of its external and internal Other. Nevertheless, his position of Americans as individuals remains ambivalent. Because temporality, for him, does matter in the representation of the American hegemony, he projects American present on its past. He comes up with the conclusion that the contemporary American hegemony becomes more threatening and sharper than in the 1940s. As a mouthpiece of today America, Alexander turns a blind eye as well as a deaf ear to all overtures intended to make him recognize and reconcile with his Arab father. In so doing, the film exposes, as Shohat and Stam explains, how Euro-Americentrism works to legitimize links to the West while undermining links to the Arab world. To deconstruct the Western historicizing of the Arab world, Chahine brings to the surface the history of Alexandria as a space of openness and cultural co-existence between different ethnicities and religions. Further, he dismantles the Western representation of the Third World as a mere site of artifact and folklore through his brilliant theatrical performance and expressive dance by which he represents Alexandria as a space of artistic and cultural enrichments. More interestingly, the one who comes from an oriental space represented as unfamiliar, backward or threatening proves to be more familiar, supreme and impressive than his American colleagues. Having brought to play the glorious history of Egypt and, symbolically, the Arab world that has been so far distorted by colonial discourse does never mean that Chahine looks at Egypt or the Arab world through ethnocentric lenses. This is going to be examined in the next section through the case analysis of his film *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos, 2007).

1.2. Social and Human Consciousness as a Resistance to the Rampant Chaos and Corruption in Chahine's *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos, 2007)

Chahine's *Chaos* problematizes the conflict between the mechanisms of corruption and chaos and the dialectics of social consciousness in the contemporary Egyptian context. It narrates the story of a police officer named Hatem who, with the support of his superiors, exercises illegal and arbitrary detention, brutal torture and forced disappearance of civil demonstrators, among

other corrupt practices. Setting from the vision of the regime as heterogeneous, the film also displays how Hatem's illegal and despotic practices have been internally resisted by an uncorrupt deputy public prosecutor called Sharif who strives for implementing laws and social justice. Ironically, the corrupt, unscrupulous and sadistic officer, Hatem, falls in unrequited love with his neighboring upright and scrupulous daughter, Nour, whose heart is profoundly attracted to Sharif. He pursues various avenues to woo her, but without avail. Conversely, the principled Sharif engages in love with pot-smoking, tattooed girlfriend called Sylvia. However, because of her Western lifestyle, moral decadence and abortion, he later leaves her in favor for the demure Nour. At this point, Hatem realizes that his attempts to win Nour's heart and, symbolically, subject her to his control become hopeless. Hence, he decides to rape her. Such act, along with other oppressive and lawless accumulations, has awakened the social consciousness of the neighborhood residents and given raise to their social and political upheavals. They storm the police station to release the disappeared prisoners as well as themselves from the terrifyingly sadistic police officer. Among the angry crowd, Hatim appears to be extremely envious at seeing Sharif establish a happy and loving relationship with Nour. As a result, he shoots his rival and then commits suicide, leaving the tension unresolved. The sub-stories of the film uncover that the corruption of militant nationalists is related to the corruption and chaos of the familial, educational, political and religious matrixes.

From the outset, the film dramatizes how totalitarian nationalism can get the ruling system into the state of chaos and tension. The introductory scene opens with a series of long shots of student-led demonstrations chased and cruelly suppressed by the police in the Shubra district of Cairo. Such shots are panned and tilted as an indication of instability. The director also employs a rapid revolutionary music, accompanied with screams of the suppressed demonstrators and rapid cuttings to apparently convey a state of turbulent and chaotic tension. Further, the dominant and resistant characters, whose roles are going to unfold as the events of the film develop, are almost introduced through the camera zooming in on their scowling faces that are flushing red with anger and ferocity. The strained relations raised in the introductory scene give us a hint about the predicaments of nationalism in terms of its failure to adhere to the dictated human values and meet the aspirations of the masses. In addition, such strained beginning aesthetically excites the spectators' anticipation of what would be revealed next.

The film tries, at first, to deconstruct the legitimacy of the repressive and corrupt system through laying bare its oppressive practices so as to reconstruct an alternative legitimacy; the legitimacy of resistance. In this regard, the first scene of the film displays the police violations of civil rights. It opens with a group of political activists thrown out cruelly into underground dark cells for which natural light is not permitted. The camera moves from a medium long shot showing the main entrance of the police station and the prison van to a medium close up centering on the conversation between the two police officers, Sami and Hatem. In so doing, the film makes connection between the terrifyingly secretive world of the police where only the front side of the station appears to the public and the notoriously despotic characters who, without any trial, exercise arbitrary arrest, detention and torture.

The police's violation of laws and their brutality against the political prisoners are given special focus as well as large space in the film because of being likely a cyclical phenomenon of the police state. In the short dialogue recorded at the first scene of the film between the two senior police officers Sami and Hatem, the former initiates his speech by ordering the latter to discipline and punish the political detainees till their mentality is changed. Driven by his sadistic impulses, the latter responds to his superior officer's order by subjecting them to a range of brutal and torturing practices, including threatening, recurrent insult and slapping, severe beating, electro shocks, and even electrocution. Such aggressive practices are recurrently raised in many scenes of the film and exerted under the pretext of keeping national security. Comparing the practices of the militant nationalists to those of the French colonizers in the Moroccan film *Attach* affirms the argument, stressed by Fanon, that nationalism can turn into another face of colonialism. Therefore, "[I]f we really want to safeguard our countries from regression, paralysis, or collapse, we must rapidly switch from a national consciousness to a social and political consciousness."[28]

It is unquestionable that colonialism brings about some sorts of resistance and so does autocratic nationalism. This reminds me of Michel Foucault's central argument of the inseparable connection between power and resistance, "where there is power, there is resistance." [29] In correspondence with Foucault's argument, the film shows that Hatem, who seemingly has an iron grasp of the neighborhood, could not impose his absolute control upon the

[28] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2004, p. 142.

[29] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) p. 95.

political demonstrators even in the prison cells, because he simply fails to deactivate the detainees' consciousness or inhibits their reactions. Further, he could not impose his love, and symbolically his domination, upon his neighboring daughter Nour in spite of his tirelessly persuasive and threatening attempts. On the contrary, his resort to force by raping her proves to be the last straw that breaks his back.

A number of shots picked up within the underground cells show that Hatim's brutal practices against the political prisoners appear helpless to control their gestures, gazes, and voices. In this regard, Hatem is initially shot from low angle perspective while he is looking down upon the prisoners and ordering them to line up and put down all their personal properties as an indication of his power and superiority. Although his order is not broken, it is coolly received as it is observed in their slow movement. Also, some of them are seen shaking their heads in a gesture of resistance. Their reactions appear to influence his arrogant sense of superiority. So, he resorts to threats and violence in hope to be recognized as having supreme power over the whole Egyptian citizens. He emphatically advocates the detainees: "Do not think that the matter is chaotic. The country has an iron government and the government is me."[30] He claims absolute authority for himself. However, the prisoners cure his claim of dominant supremacy over them through fixing him with contemptuous gazes and paying less, if no, attention to his threatening speech. This is manifest in the simultaneous phone call of one prisoner for his family. The prisoner rejects putting down his phone as a courageous reaction against the forced disappearance. The detainee's awareness of his rights to inform his family of being imprisoned and to be released frustrates Hatem's dream of total control.

The camera appears to side with the voices of the oppressed because it is positioned in the space of a prisoner and it, thus, records the scene from his view point. Further, Hatem's seemingly powerful position is shaken by its movement from low angle shot to a parallel one. In so doing, the camera seems to mock at his delusions of grandeur because his superior position to direct orders is reduced; he is obliged to go down the stairs and engage in a physical struggle with the prisoners. In addition to being turned into an object of the camera's gaze, Hatem becomes the object of the prisoners' mocking gazes. Their scornful gazes make him very nervous and get him to lose control over his anger. This implies, on the one hand, the complexity and slippery nature of power relations in the sense that the officer who dreams to take absolute

[30] Youssef Chahine (dir.), *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos). Misr International Films, 2007

control upon others becomes out of control of himself. On the other hand, it signifies that power is not possessed by the police officer alone, but also by the political detainees who prove that agency is shared rather than monopolized. Here, we reach to the argument stressed by Michel Foucault, Sara Mills, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, among others, that power cannot be possessed, but rather questioned, resisted and challenged as it is clearly seen throughout the film.

The complex relationship between power and resistance is further depicted through Hatem's failure to impose his love on the scrupulous Nour. In his pursuit of her, Hatim is seen tirelessly alternating between persuasion and threats in order to have his love reciprocated, but to no avail. Contrarily, she contemptuously despises and rejects him. Her rejection is to be read as a metaphor for resistance to the oppressive relations and an assertion of self-independence. Obsessed with the desire of having control over her, Hatim pursues alternative avenues thought to make her love possible. He resorts to the Sufi Imam and Christian priests to seek them a love portion by which he could woo her. Both of them refuse magic; the Sufi cleric urges him to purify his spirit in order to understand the meaning of love, and the Christian cleric promises to pray for him. Their replies suggest that love is something spiritual and unselfish. Accordingly, it can never be compatible with domination and oppression. When he realizes that their assumptions cannot fulfill his selfish motive, he promptly turns to superstitious devices. As a last attempt, he hopelessly celebrates the suggestion of an imprisoned prostitute on how he could impress women by re-fashioning his onward appearance. Frustrated by the failure of his persuasive practices and envied by his realization of the mutual love established between Sharif and Nour, Hatim finally abducts and rapes her by force. However, the director intelligently connects the loss of Nour's virginity with the sunset as an omen foretelling the decay of his authority.

In this context, the discourse of unrequited love is to be seen as a political signifier of the interplay of domination and counter-domination. As Roland Greene puts it, "[t]he discourse of love is not simply interpersonal as one might expect, but political and imperial."[31] Hatim's continuous attempts to have control over Nour's heart and his disregard of her freedom of choice symbolize that the oppressive powers, be they colonial, national or patriarchal, employ every means available to impose their hegemony. When Hatim becomes desperate to enforce his love

[31] Roland Greene, *Unrequited Conquests: Love and Empire in the Colonial Americas*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 1.

over her through softly persuasive avenues, he resorts to force by raping the female body just as the colonizer forcibly rapes the colonies.

Nevertheless, the rape act does not render her submissive or impels her to keep it secret, as in the case of the Yemeni film *I Am Nojoud Aged 10 and Divorced.* In the Yemeni film, the rape case is negotiated and settled according to the patriarchal honor codes, dictating to keep it invisible and force the rapist and raped victim into marriage, as it is illustrated in the third chapter. Conversely, the rape affair in Chahine's *Chaos* is perceived as an offence against society and, thus, turns into serious public concerns. That is, the raped victim shifts her victimization from the shroud of secrecy and shame to the arena of publicity and resistance.

The rape of the female body is seen intersecting with the rape of authority. This highlights, on the one hand, the selfish and sadistic nature of such rape, which is driven by the lust for domination. On the other hand, it emphasizes how oppressive practices echo each other because they operate within society and are of person-directed type. Hatim is seen glorifying himself as an absolute ruler of Egypt although he is no more than a police officer of the Shubra district of Cairo. He even wields his power over the restaurant's owner whom he has been devouring his food without payment for more than twenty years. In an exaggeration of his lust and greediness, the camera comes close to focus on his mouth while he is lustfully gulping the breakfast meal like a wild beast. Further, the camera places him out of frame to focus on the money he devours as bribery from clients. His greediness climaxes in his glorification of himself as the absolute autocrat of Egypt, reprimanding the owner, who demands payment of a bill, with his recurrently selfish mantra "who is ungrateful for Hatim is ungrateful for Egypt."[32] In so doing, the director highlights the ugly face of the authoritarian regime whose rape of authority and looting of people's properties look like the rape of female body. Such triple rape has awaken the interrelated feminist and socio-political consciousness, resulting in collectively mass riots that corner the rapist and impel him to commit suicide. As it is articulated at the last scene of the film, the power relation is not merely challenged, but reversed in a tragic situation where the seemingly powerful oppressor becomes powerless and defenseless neither to stop the revolutionary masses nor to maintain the solidarity of his collaborators.

It is noteworthy that the ruling system is not seen as monolithic, but rather as heterogeneous. The director might intend to pay our attention to the pitfalls of generalization.

[32] Chahine (dir.), *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos).

That is to say, within the seemingly dark space, one can find various spots of light. In this connection, the director takes us to a contrasting scene established by abundance of bright light to convey an alternative image from within the regime. This fair and bright image crystalizes in the conscientious district attorney Sharif who dedicates his effort to implement law and bring about social justice. He is seen treating the detainees in human and legal way. Because of finding them innocent, he instantly releases them and exchanges happy smiles and handshake with them. To highlight his modesty, straightforwardness and his belief of equality, the camera shoots him from a parallel angle.

In contrast to the sadistic officer Hatem who is often seen ordering the soldiers to cruelly throw out the political prisoners and inflict harm upon them, the conscientious prosecutor Sharif reacts powerfully to the soldier who cruelly throws out the detainees into his office. He sharply warns him, saying "no one is permitted to touch the accused in the prosecution department."[33] Here, one can infer that the soldier is led by narrow-minded national consciousness in the sense that he perceives the political prisoners as a threat to the national security. On the basis of this stereotypic understanding, the soldier sees that they do not deserve respect. On the contrary, the chief prosecutor trespasses national consciousness to that of social and human consciousness. Therefore, he treats the accused with fairness and rejects to be stripped of their humanity. Although nationalism has merits in the anticolonial struggle, the film proves that it has its own limits in the postcolonial context if it is not developed or transformed into social and human consciousness. So, the resistance in the film is shown through the voices that stand aloof from national and religious enthusiasm and keep consciously skeptical and critical to what is ought to be upheld or refuted.

The pitfalls of nationalism are further evidenced in the dialogue between the prosecutor Sharif and the sergeant officer Sami. In his attempts to irritate Sharif against the released demonstrators, Sami makes use of the cover of keeping national security and preserving the ruling system to justify breaking the law and disvaluing the notion of human rights. He initiates: "the report on the table in front of you says that these people has committed chaotic work and plotted for a cup, but you released them."[34] Sharif is seen socially aware that his profession as prosecutor is not to reinforce the status quo or maintain the ruling authority, but rather to

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

implement laws and social justice. So, he candidly answers: "Your report is fabricated."[35] As soon as Sami is talking of having orders, Sharif strictly interrupts him, clarifying that he, as a judicial authority, applies the law and does not receive any order whatever. Sami's shaky argument is associated by his shaky, frail and pallid appearance (see figure 2a). By contrast, Sharif's solid argument is coincided with his upraised index finger, scowling face and pouting mouth (see figure 2b).

Figure 2a & b. Over-shoulder shots of Sami and Sharif signifying heterogeneous positions of the Egyptian regime (Chahine, *Chaos*, 2007).

The two figures above connote two contradictory visions of the Egyptian regime; that is, they represent the difference between those who are mobilized by national consciousness and those who are driven by social consciousness. In figure 2a, Sami's position is seen to be vulnerable because his attempts to irritating the prosecutor against the political detainees bring about reverse result as it is shown in figure 2b. In other words, his narrowly national and patriotic fanaticism is powerfully countered by Sharif's social and human consciousness. This corresponds with the vision, stressed by Fanon and Said, that liberation and social justice can only be achieved when national consciousness is transcended to that of social and human consciousness. That is to say, national ideology has to lose its grip on the human mind in favor of rebuilding equal citizenship and implementing social justice.

[35] Ibid.

This scene conveys two important visions: first, nationalism can be a replication of colonial practices and, thus, a source of chaos and instability if it does not sustain a commitment for laws and social justice; and second, the idea of iron grasp of power is just an illusion because the oppressive voices seem to be so anxious and fearful of the voice of resistance. In this scene, Sami is seen neither able to fault the reasoning behind the verdict of the prisoners' release nor daring to openly reject it. Rather, he turns to the politics of plotting and disinformation.

Within the authoritarian-nationalist regimes, the effectiveness of reforms from within the system seems to be substantially limited because of the encroachment of the executive power upon the authorities of other branches like the judiciary one. In this context, the film director shows the police officers violating and disregarding the orders of the Public Prosecutor's Department with respect to the release of the arrested demonstrators. In high angle shot, the camera tracks the despotic officer Hatim plotting a trick with his superior Sami to deactivate the prosecutor's orders. This trick is represented in keeping the judicially released prisoners away from the eyes of the judicial inspectors. Being shot from high angle, the camera seems to look upon them down and mocks at the myth of their power in the sense that they are impelled to resort to deception and disinformation to escape the prosecutor's reaction. Moreover, this scene lasts only for less than a minute to signify that such trick is vulnerable and cannot stand for a long time.

In the film, the corruption and chaos are represented as a network of interrelated relations. After the director has surveyed the police encroachment upon the authorities of the judicial system, he instantly moves to the political intrusion of the ruling Nationalist Party into the educational affairs. Within the authoritarian system, the concern is not so much on how people are best educated, but more on how they first serve the ideological needs of the ruling power. So, corruption is inculcated and maintained, here, not only through the help of police and army, but also through the dissemination of ignorance. In the school scene, the camera portrays the supporters of the ruling National Party while they are intruding the yard of the elementary school and posting placards on its walls to promote the electoral campaign for the local candidate. In so doing, the ruling Nationalist Party tries to turn the school from advancement of knowledge into a politically propagandistic platform. However, armed with social consciousness, the headmistress strongly rejects the exploitation of the school for the political interests of the ruling party. As an indication of her strong and powerful position, the camera shoots her from law angle while she is

sharply ordering the safeguard to get electoral propagandists out of school, along with what she refers to as "their garbage."[36] The reasonable response of the female manager to the political candidate reveals the power of education in awakening social consciousness and in working out social reforms.

The cruel irony is that the democracy adopted by the authoritarian nationalist regimes might bring to people a darker chapter of dictatorship, corruption, and chaos. In this regard, the candidate of the ruling Nationalist Party is seen not merely fetishizing the Nationalist Party, but also turning it into idol. He gives the school guardian a severe reprimand for his elimination of the posted placards, saying: "Have you become mad? Who dare to take out the signs of the Nationalist Party?"[37] Although the guardian seems to be interpellated to uncritically consume the mainstream official discourse as it appears in his apology for his conduct, the school headmistress strongly and invincibly reacts.

Advancing secular approach, the headmistress rebukes the intruders and stakes out her absolute opposition to their political intrusion in the educational institutions. When the candidate dares to challenge her, she levels her sharp gaze at him, reminding him of how such unfair and non-transparent election has perpetuated the autocratic nationalist regime for more than two decades. She uses the power of memory to dismantle the pseudo-democracy that has been based on a single party dominance. The dialogue is concluded with exclusionary and underlying threatening words leveled by the candidate at the headmistress, saying: "people like you have been taken down since a long time." [38] Read in this way, the film is to be seen, on the one side, as a radical critique of the essentially authoritarian nationalist regimes in which political conformity to the dominant ideology becomes the common currency. On the other side, it is to be viewed as a celebration of the resistant voices among them women's voice that comes at the forefront of social transformation, provided that they are armed with social and human consciousness.

The electoral, partisan mobilization of the masses along nationalist lines paves the way for a more overt electoral mobilization on religious grounds. The film displays electoral posters of the Muslim Brotherhood Party carrying religious slogans such as "Islam is neither Eastern nor Western," and "Islam is the solution."[39] Cajoled by the propagandist image of the Muslim

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Brotherhood being able to treat all problems, Bahia is seen grapping her daughter's hand and dragging her toward the gate of the Brotherhood's office as illustrated in figure 3 below. Bahia is also seen pointing out to the posted photo of the candidate whom she and, symbolically, various ordinary people expect to have a solution to each problem.

Figure 3. Medium shot of Bahia pulling her reluctant daughter up toward the Brotherhood's candidate (Chahine, *Chaos*, 2007).

Figure 4. Close-up shot of an electoral poster instrumentalizing religion for political gains (Chahine, *Chaos*, 2007).

Figure 3 Shows that Nour appears reluctant to be uncritically driven by such ideological slogans as it is expressed in her abrupt stop and her apparent inclination to return back once she sees the photo of the Brotherhood's candidate. In figure 4, the camera, in an extreme close up shot, highlights their long standing mantra "Islam is the solution." The candidate's voice-over is simultaneously heard, affirming: "Sure, we are the solution."[40] Here, the Muslim brothers are portrayed as the exclusive representatives of Islam, because the candidate defines the word "Islam" stated in the mantra by the first person pronoun "we". However, if we scrutinize at figure 4, we find out that part of the verse is obviously cut. This seemingly conveys that the Quranic text is extracted and employed outside its context and so does Islam. On this account, the leaders of the Muslim brothers would not only contradict their beguiling mantra, but also undermine their religious and political credibility. This means that the employment of the

[40] Ibid.

Quranic verse outside its context for the sake of political gains gets one embroil in chaos and perhaps hypocrisy.

The director tries to measure the objectivity of the image promoted about the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood from the marginalized people's perspective who have been once driven by their ideology. The test of such assumption is examined through face-to-face cultural encounter. In this respect, the camera, in a jump cut shot, takes us forward to the interview held in the candidate's office. Bahia is seen asking him about his capacity to rid them of their neighbor's continuous persuasion of her daughter. Instead of assisting them, he capitalizes on their problem to serve the political aspirations of his party. He is seen urging them to participate as fully as possible in the partisan mobilization for their election so as to get all their problems solved. Strikingly enough, he goes so far to legitimize even lies and deceit, saying: "if our electoral competitors gave you money, it would be halal for you. But behind the curtain, no one could see you other than Allah and your conscience. Your vote for us is the road to the paradise."[41] His reply seems quite shocking to them as it is noticeably inferred not only from their frowning and annoyed facial expressions recorded by the alternations of close-up shots, but also from Bahia's removal of her veil as soon as she gets out of his office. In so doing, the director criticizes the pitfalls of religious fanaticism when religion is used not to provide a sense of collective identity, but rather polarization and disinformation. He also locates the voices of resistance in those who keep questioning what is said or promoted, because they can hardly ever be led by narrow-minded ideologies, be they packaged in religious or secular milieus.

The corruption and chaos portrayed in the film is not presented as an individual case, but rather as a general culture passed down over years. This is exemplified in the poorly deteriorating educational condition. Education has not been seen as a policy priority for the government, because graduation and appointment have not been governed by proficiency standards, but rather by chaos and corruption. For example, the history teacher could not take control of his noisy class. Further, He could not trespass his superficially traditional thinking of history as a stable entity. That is, he could not realize that human sciences are interrelated and that historical changes are coincided with the changes of the geographical map. Another example is when the English supervisor has evaluated the level of the junior high school's learners; he finds out that they could not write or speak even one English word. In the dialogue recorded

[41]Ibid.

between the headmistress and the supervisor, they admit that chaos pervades all sectors of life, among them the educational field.

The director, through the voice of the English teacher Nour, emphasizes that the problem is cyclical and it primarily lies in the decline of the educational system as a whole. Nour frankly reveals that her school teachers did not speak English well and her university teachers were occupied with private tutoring at the expense of the public one. She also fairly confesses that she does merit neither graduation nor appointment, stating: "I graduated from the English Department at faculty of education though I could not speak even a word . . . I am unqualified teacher, but I have a bachelor degree."[42] However, awaken by social consciousness, Nour does not feel relieved of her responsibility to improve her English skill and overcome her weak performance. The resistance in this scene is articulated in the triple voices' frankness, transparency and awareness of the common responsibilities. This is expressed verbally through their objective diagnosis of the problem and visually through the abundance of bright lighting superimposed on their interview.

By the same token, the rampant chaos and corruption are exemplified in the social and moral deteriorating conditions. The film is set within a poor working-class neighborhood; the sense of poverty and deprivation seems to be touched throughout the film. Thus, the film emphasizes the need for social consciousness in politics, pedagogy, legislation, theology and religion. As Charles Cooleyit cites, "All consciousness, all vivid, wide-awake state of mind, is social consciousness, because a sense of our relation to other persons, or of other persons to one another, can hardly fail to be a part of it."[43]

In conclusion, the film criticizes the violations of civil rights by the regime that came to power through revolution. It mocks at the pseudo-democracy, which brings to people a darker chapter of chaos, corruption and dictatorship. The film also digs deep into the root of the problem. However, the more the director investigates it, the more complex and multidimensional it appears. The director, indeed, leaps over the heads of the political parties, educational system, religious ideologies, and familial kinship, laying bare how their distance from social and human consciousness has significantly led to the emergence and development of the chaos. In other words, the absence of social and human consciousness is seen as the core reason not merely

[42] Ibid.

[43] Charles H. Cooleyit, "Social Consciousness," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 5 (Mar., 1907), p. 688. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2762377 (Accessed 03 July 2019).

behind the corruption of the security system, but most importantly behind that of the political, educational, religious and even familial matrixes. This emphasizes the socio-political significance of Fanon and Said's theorization of social consciousness as a core step in the process of liberation. The film works on double side: It provides a critique of the narrowly national and religious fanaticism in which political conformity to the dominant ideology becomes the common currency. On the other side, unlike Spivak who silences the subalterns' socio-political agency and strips them of their autonomous consciousness, the film highlights how oppression generates one's own social consciousness, which, in turn, brings up the fragmented subalterns around a common cause. Their solidarity turns their fragmented repressed demonstrations in the beginning of the film into a massive revolution at the end of the film, by which they throw the regime out, release the political detainees and hence problematize the slippery nature of power and agency.

1.3. Relocating Identity: Lower-class Working Women as a Progressive Force for Social Change in Khan's *Fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl, 2014)

Mohamed Khan is regarded as one of Egypt's most prolific cinematic figures with a directorial career extending to over three decades. According to the film critic Hacen Haddad, Khan has a distinctive artistic and intellectual directing vision characterized by creatively progressive research and renewal.[44] In his review of Khan's work, Haddad argues that Khan seems not simply concerned with the narration of the story, but more importantly with characterization and small details through which he has deeply investigated the underlying structure of social problems within the Egyptian society.[45] Proceeding from the idea that women have been almost socially oppressed and excluded from the process of decision-making, Khan has powerfully championed with women's struggle for recognition. He has made women's issues a central focus of his films. Among the films he produced about women's struggle for social justice and gender equality are *Ahlam Hind wa-Kamilya* (Dreams of Hind and Camelia, 1988),

[44] See Hacen Haddad, *Muhammad Khan .. Sinima' al-Shakhsiyyat wa-l-Tafasil al-Saghira* (Mohamed Khan .. Cinema of characters and Small Details), (Cairo: Al-Manhal, 2017), pp. 8 and 106.

[45] Ibid.

Banat wast al-balad (Downtown Girls, 2005), *Fi Shuqqat Misr al-Jadida* (The Heliopolis Apartment, 2007), and his film under study *Fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl, 2014).

The film *Factory Girl* portrays the struggle of lower working class Egyptian women against social stratification and gender constraints. It tells the story of an ambitious lower middle-class girl, Hiyam, who works together with her female counterparts in a textile factory. In the factory, each girl dreams to draw the attention of a new handsome middle-class supervisor named Salah in hopes to eliminate or, at least, reduce class hierarchy and thus create a world of mutual recognition. Despite being bordered by a patriarchal context perceiving unmarried woman's voicing of her love for a man as a social taboo, Hiyam seems courageous enough to openly declare her attraction to Salah and to go further in developing such relationship so as to have her love be reciprocated. She sees in Salah a glimmer of hope for blurring the socially hierarchal gap between them. Unfortunately, her dream of establishing a reciprocal relation with him is not only faced by rejection, but also beset by the rumors that target her honor as a result of her adventure to trespass class and gender borders. When the consequences of such rumors become unbearable, she tries to commit a suicide by throwing herself down from the balcony of her house as an indication of her rejection to be ruled by the patriarchal system that simultaneously plays the role of accuser and judge against the innocent female victim. She is consequently taken to the hospital where the disseminators of rumors and those who are uncritically driven by them are implicitly condemned as soon as they know that she is still a virgin. She, thus, regains her dignity and strength. With unbeatable spirit, she finally performs a triumphant dance on Salah's wedding night in the presence of his bride. Her victorious dance looks like that of a victor around his/her defeated enemy.

The film works mainly on two interrelated levels: criticism of the social construction of class and gender, and articulation of women's strategies for social change. It opens with a scene of the lives of lower-middle class women working in a textile factory, with special focus on their caring attitudes towards Munir, a retiring supervisor who is about to leave the factory. However, Munir seems unable to return back their sentiments because of being likely bound by class and gender restraints. Though they have been working together in the same space, he shows little interactional response to their affectionate speeches and farewell expressions. In farewell shots, the camera alternates between close-ups of the working girls overlooking from the high window of the factory and medium shots of Munir walking down on the street. The girls are seen seeking

him to even glance back over his shoulder as a last farewell to them, but he seems to be chained by the socially constructed borders, which are manifest in his unsociable and belated response. They are shot at a higher position to signify that unpretentiousness, love and sociability are to epitomize emancipation and agency, while he is shot at a lower position to connote that pretentiousness, arrogance and frowning behavior can symbolize vulnerability and anxiety of cultural encounter. In so doing, the film critiques the patriarchal discourse, which discriminates the subaltern people on the basis of their gender and class identity, and advances a different view of social relations premised on the notion of recognition.

It is important to mention that the working women's quest for Munir's reciprocated farewell or his future visits stems from humanitarian vision rather than from vulnerable position. As evidence, the female protagonist Hiyam reacts to his seemingly uncaring responses with candid statement stressed with powerful gaze and sharp tone, saying: "Be aware! Those who do not care about us, we, in return, do not care about them at all."[46] Her speech is followed by a caricature of a frowning male face painted on a shirt hanging at her back as a sign of her determination to ignore any unbalanced relationships. Despite being apparently less affected by their long spatial relations, he is not demonized or stripped out of his humanity because the director shows him doing no harm to them. Meanwhile, his belated response can be read as an indication of the latent humanity obscured by the socially constructed borders. This signifies that human relation cannot be straightforwardly interpreted. Rather, it is complex, ambivalent, multidimensional and rich of changes; it is open for mismatch and match, conflict and reconciliation. Within the complex context of human relations, one can argue that there is still almost, if not always, a humanitarian thread entrusted to bring different people together whatever the gap they might have in their relationship. In so doing, the film treats the relationship between men and women as well as middle and lower classes "not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices and often within radically symmetrical relations of power."[47]

After this ambiguous but auspicious opening, the film shows Hiyam, along with her younger sister and counterpart girls, cheerfully getting out from the gate of the textile factory after the rain has just stopped. Hiyam is seen smilingly stretching out her right hand towards the

[46] Mohamed Khan (dir.), *Fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl). Middle West Films, 2014.
[47] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8

sky to touch a raindrop as a way to relieve herself of the work fatigue and to express her optimistic view of life. In a jump cut shot, the scene moves to the popularly poor neighborhood where the factory girls live to make a link between their workspace and home space so as to feature the class to which they belong and, thus, create a sympathy with their struggle against unequal treatment.

In spite of being situated within a low-middle class stratum, the factory girls' socially lower-constructed position could not turn them fragile or render them depressive or pessimistic; they are seen full of vitality, hope and spiritual power, shifting misery into felicity and turning material deprivation into spiritual richness. This signifies, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue, that "'[d]isempowered'" and 'empowered' . . . are relational terms; people can occupy diverse positions."[48] The working class women are seen disempowered on the material axis, but not on the spiritual and psychological axis. In this regard, the camera shows them collecting hanging washes from the balcony of their narrow buildings during a brightly rainy day in an atmosphere of joy and close affinity. As the rain helps relieve the tension in the air, their simultaneously exchanging smiles and jokes wash and relieve the consequences of their poorly hierarchal life in the earth. Here, the director seems to convey that power, vitality and happiness come from within; they emerge from the spirit, rather than from socially constructed and transformational factors such as class or gender belonging. This scene, as the most scenes of the film, is highly lighted to help convey that the simply poor life of the lower class working women could not strip them out of their spiritual security or shake their self-confidence.

In this film, Khan devotes more focus to celebrating women's rhetoric of resistance than to denunciating the politics of their victimization. In this respect, Hiyam mother, Aida, is seen not only mocking at gender-based priorities, but also turning such priorities upside down. She deconstructs the patriarchal construction of gender preference through her dialogical narration of a dream in which she associates giving birth to a female child with good-omen, prosperity and impending changes for better as opposed to a male child. Through a reverse double standard, Aida tries to celebrate the delivery of the female child and condemn the double standard the patriarchal society exercises against women, particularly those of lower classes. She also brings to the surface a fairy tale revolving around a female jinn prevailed by Allah over a man who stood against the delivery of a female child. The female jinn fell in unrequited love with him and

[48] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 343.

kept on cursing and supplicating upon him for his rejection to love her back. As a result of her curse and prayers against him, all his descendants were destined to be female children, and so was the neighborhood where he settled. This tale exposes how patriarchal culture dreads the birth of a woman. Yet, the presence and, thus, visibility of women become inescapable. The tale can also be interpreted as a metaphor of these lower class-working women's consciousness not only of the constructed myth of male superiority, but also of how such superiority complex stands against the Lord's will. Accordingly, their resistance to hegemonic masculinity is proved to be stemmed, in opposition to Spivak's argument, from their self-consciousness, rather than from being driven by another consciousness.

No doubt, gender and class intersect in certain ways to aggravate hierarchy and stratification. But, the question to be raised is: what are the means by which these women can bridge class gaps and break down gender division? The film director selects the means of love as strategic option to win the heart of those swallowed by class and gender divisions. In addition, he considers hope as light to dispel the gloom that overcasts over the oppressed women's lives and as a fertilizer to provide them with energy and vitality that can help them overcome moments of weakness and frustration. However, it seems, for him, that hope cannot work unless it is operated by work. Hence, he does not turn a blind eye to the major importance of work as an effective passage to economic independence and consequently to the elevation of social status. Further, women's penetration of male dominated spaces is seen helpful to overcome or, at least, alleviate gender gaps constructed by the patriarchal society.

In a surrounding saturated with class disparity and gender discrimination, the messages of love and hope are to be seen, on the personal level, as sources of vitality and spiritual security. On the social level, such messages seem to be of instrumental value not only in keeping the marginalized women visible, but also in foregrounding their vision of social reforms. In a public space, Hiyam, along with her neighboring daughters, inaugurates her journey of love with an optimistic song, *al-Dunya Rabi' wa-l-Jaw Badi'* (Spring Season, Lovely Weather), recorded by Souad Hosni's cheerful voice to whom the film is dedicated in acknowledgment for her role, as an artist and musician, in implementing the messages of love, joy and human intersection. Their listening to the spring song is associated with feelings of love and joy as it is seen in their passing glances to the boys opposite to them with whom they exchange sweet smiles and pieces of eating. In so doing, the director seems to consider love and hope as fuel for vitality and

optimistic spirit by which women could handle hierarchal challenges and overcome gender constraints. That is, social emancipation comes as a result of psychological liberation. In other words, women's struggle over power depends at first on how they conceive themselves and their roles in relation to men.

Compatible with the subaltern studies' emphasis on the change from below, the film locates the agency of change in the working class women. Symbolically, the spring, where the temporal setting of the film is set in, stands for hope, joy, and renaissance of life. Likewise, being armed with liberating spirits, lower class-working women are most probably regarded as bearers of progressive change in oppressive contexts. In a symbolic gesture to the important role of the lower-class young women in shifting gender and class relations, the camera shows the name of the new middle-class supervisor Salah written down on the blocked door behind them, while they are singing the song of the spring. This suggests that they are hopefully going to let his heart be open for love and inclusion instead of being frozen within the confines of class and gender ideology. In other words, they are socially entrusted to blur class and gender boundaries among those men and even women who are still lagging behind in the realization of class and gender equality.

In Khan's view, class and gender are main constitutive of patriarchal society. Therefore, he discusses class differences in relation to man-woman relationship through the story of unrequited love between Hiyam and Salah. Although the class differences between them seem to be little, the film depicts such differences at their most apparent positions through the director's engagement in small details. For example, the director follows a form of structural comparison between their popular neighborhoods, the sizes of their streets, the characteristics of the houses where they live—such as the shape of their balconies, the furniture, accessories and the design of their rooms—and even the styles of their clothes. Although they work in the same space, the director makes it important to distinguish between their occupations; he works as an engineer, while she works as a seamstress. Further, the economic differences between them are identified through characterizing the hospitals to which they are taken when they become sick. These comparisons convey that Hiyam has relatively less advantaged lifestyle, less educational level and lower rate of income than that enjoyed by Salah, the one she dreams to make him love her back. This conveys that gender factor adds further complications to class stratification in the sense that class gap becomes large when it is intermingled with gender relations. Therefore, as a

woman, Hiyam's dream of establishing reciprocal relationship seems to be faced by the interconnected constraints of class and gender.

The unbalanced relationship between them is symbolically inferred from their first encounter. The director selects the narrow entrance of the stairwell, which is only big enough for one person, to be the location of their initial meeting (see figure 5). The choice of the narrow entrance conveys that they cannot cross together because of being symbolically bound by class and gender restrictions. As an indication of such restricted hierarchy, Hiyam is shown in a lower position looking up at him, while he is seen in a high status position looking down at her. So, she either has to ascend her lower status or he has to descend his high status so as to reduce the socially constructed gap between them and, consequently, develop a requited love.

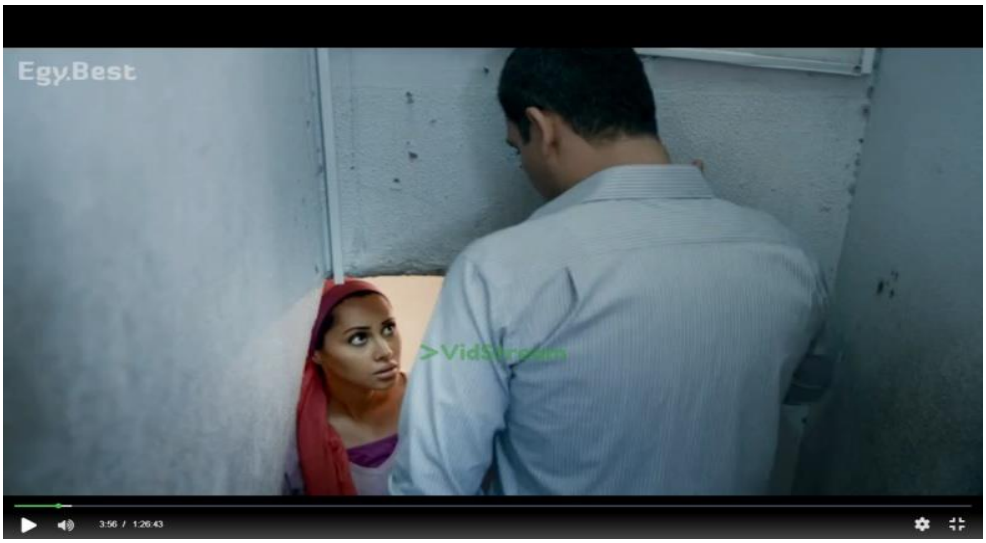

Figure 5. Medium shot of the first encounter between the middle class Salah and the lower working-class Hiyam (Khan, *Factory Girl*, 2014).

Unlike Hiyam who seems aspiring for gender and class equality as it is inferred from the looks of her eyes, Salah appears to be swayed by gender hierarchy and class stratification. He seemingly constructs the world according to the codes of social hierarchy to which he must conform. Thus, he is seen unable to initiate reciprocal interaction with the different Other whom he imagines to be less privileged than him. In so doing, the director shows the manner in which class and gender divisions make some people be alienated in their social context. In spite of having material

privileges, Salah seems to lack spiritual security because he psychologically secludes himself within the rigid chains of class and gender.

In this respect, the director carries out harsh attack on class and gender hierarchies. He unloads the handsome middle class Salah from his worth by portraying him as oscillated and submissive to hierarchal traditions, which get him more prone to suffer from psychological and social alienation. The camera shows him almost secluded in narrow spaces like his narrow office or the balcony of his house. Because of being driven by socially repressive conventions, it might be difficult for him to establish close or intimate relationship outside his class and gender. Thus, his superiority complex causes him to experience loneliness in the presence of other people with whom he shares the same workspace, because he identifies himself on the basis of class and gender.

By contrast, the director reloads the lower working woman Hiyam with positive values and worth in terms of showing her capable to emit the beam of love and hope from the depth of suffering and exploitation. To help enhance this view point, the camera almost shoots her outside the factory, in conjunction with her relatives or female counterparts, from high angle perspective not to look down upon her but to confirm that her resistance emanates from within a context governed by economic exploitation and socio-political hegemony. Driven by the motive of love, she attempts to free her would-be lover Salah from the burden of isolation and open his heart to an encompassing view, which brings human relationship into the space of mutuality and equality.

The vision adopted in the film about love conforms in the main to the sociologists' viewpoint assuming it to be "essentially liberating and beneficial"[49] and "a reaction to the over-rationalization of capitalist society—an attempt to reinvest everyday life with enchantment and spiritual meaning."[50] When we scrutinize at their exchanging humors and jokes within the factory, we find out that their work is not only a way for living, but also a source of joy and satisfaction. They are seen adorned with exchanging jokes, wearing brightly colorful clothes and having fun reading horoscopes during their lunch time. Love appears to push them to create happiness from simple things. In other words, their liberating spirits distract them from succumbing to the melancholy of the world surrounding them. In so doing, the film deals with

[49] Wendy Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart: Gender, Power and the Delusions of Love* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. xi.

[50] Ibid: 24.

love in its broad dimension: love of work, love of joy, jokes and friendship, and love of liberation from social restraints.

The director's vision of love, thus, contradicts with the conviction of Western feminists like Shulamith Firestone, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and Ann Dougals, among others, who integrate love in a Marxist framework by perceiving it as an ideological device to underpin the interests of the patriarchal system. For example, Firestone argues that "love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today."[51] Her idea is that women are preoccupied with love and live for it, while men live for work. Thus, love, for her, is "a situation of total emotional vulnerability."[52] De Beauvoir also views love as a source of women's vulnerability and a mere delusion of liberty.[53] On the contrary, the film perceives love as a route to freedom and a sign of spiritual empowerment. Hiyam's initiation and persuasion of love and dialogue reverses the patriarchal proverb hinted by Gramsci that "man is a hunter, woman is a temptress."[54] Her initiative acts subvert the patriarchal discourse representing a man as a bearer of the look while reducing woman to the receptionist and subordinate state or to a mere plaything.

In contrast to Salah who surrenders to the social constraints that restrict his freedom of love, Hiyam attempts to liberate herself from the confines of the traditionally patriarchal culture that perceives love negotiation as a social taboo for a single woman. In so doing, she appears to have self-sovereignty represented by determining her relationship instead of being determined for her by her parent or male relatives. This unfolds later in the film through her failed suicide attempt as a rejection to be pushed into a coercive and unsatisfying relationship with her would-be lover Salah. It is consequently obvious that the love she has been pursuing for is the one that is grounded on fair and democratic negotiations and is purposefully directed towards mutual enrichment.

If we go in line with the assumption that perceives love as a device underpinning the patriarchal culture, these obvious questions present themselves: How can we bridge, for

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[51] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), p. 126.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed., H. M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), p. 608.

[54] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Volume 1*, ed. and intro. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 170.

example, class, gender and religious gaps between people in the absence of love? How coexistence and culture of recognition can be established? And how man-woman relationships could be managed if it is expected to be driven by hate rather than by love and mercy? It is no doubt that love can be used as an ideological device to perpetuate women's subordination in the case of woman's socioeconomic dependency on her spouse. But, this film shows Hiyam to be financially independent. Her love for Salah is driven neither by the desire to search for an out from her socio-economic situation nor by the need for his protection. Rather, she, as her male counterpart, desires to have a partner with whom she can reciprocate love and mercy. In this case, love is used as strategic resistance to implement purposefully social change and healthy relationships based on harmony and reciprocity. Love, in itself, is a means to achieve an end. Therefore, it can be used as a site of domination if it is oriented to construct the culture of imperialism, domination or egoism as it is previously illustrated in the film under study *Chaos* (2006). Nevertheless, it can most importantly be used as a site of resistance if it is directed to establish the culture of recognition, democracy and reciprocity as it is manifest now in the film under analysis *Factory Girls* (2014), and later in the Yemeni films *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005) and *10 Days before the Wedding* (2018). In fact, as individuals have the right to pursue for reciprocal relationships, they have also the right to leave the coercive or unsatisfying relationships even if it is expected, by the dominant standards, to lead to chaos and instability because democracy has sometimes a high price.

Unlike the discourse of unrequited love in Chahine's film *Chaos*, which is governed by the impulse of domination and control and pursued through oppressive routes, love in this film is operated by the desire for reciprocity and pursued through democratic channels. For the director, human bond is definitely important. But, such bond has to be based on fair negotiation, rather than on domination and hegemony. In her persuading to win Salah's heart, Hiyam makes use of social occasions so as to close the distance between them in a democratic manner. For example, she tries to convince him to go with them in a trip to an area called *Ayn al-Sukhna* in order to pave the space for cultural interactions. She also attempts, in conjunction with her female counterparts, to blur the gap between them by sharing food and joy with him. Further, Hiyam utilizes the opportunity of being sick to develop human and love relationship with him; she pays him recurrent visits and provides him with some help and gifts. Their relationship evolves to the

point of kiss exchange which proves later to be emotionally asymmetrical like the world surrounding them.

What is important is that her love for him is not driven by socio-economic reasons or by the desire of seeking protection. That is, she does not search for an out from her socioeconomic condition or for escape from her extended family. Moreover, she does not pay more attention to her appearance because she does not perceive herself as an object to be looked at. Instead, she views herself as an active agent of social change rather than a passive victim of sexuality. The message of love she initiates is to be understood as a metaphor, signifying that the voice of woman is by no means shame. The dialogue she inaugurates with him shows her to be so keen to preserve her dignity and respect her would-be lover's feelings and sovereignty.

The film director, however, does not idealize the shift that those women are progressing in elevating women's status and blurring social hierarchies. He definitely admits the challenges of implementing social transformation in oppressive contexts. In this vein, Hiyam is seen persuading for a life of togetherness and equality. But, at each point of her persuasions, it becomes obvious that the world is asymmetrical. Her attempts of establishing reciprocal relationship with Salah are inhibited not only by Salah's mother who imagines the development of such relationship to be a threat to their social status, but also by the tongues of the society, which uncritically swallows rumors without any attempt at verification.

As Mary Schwartz and BarBara Scott state, "Stereotyping is used to justify unequal treatment of specific groups."[55] Having dared to alter gender norms in a society so intense and ingrained in patriarchy, Hiyam falls prey to rumors targeting her honor; she is accused of being promiscuous. Without any account of eyewitness, her honor becomes the preoccupation of the public, including her female counterparts and relatives. She uses silence as a way to express her self-confidence of being chaste and consequently subvert the rumors about her honor. Although her silence might be read as a sign of passivity, it is to be interpreted, here, as a powerful condemnation of those who are uncritically swept by rumors. Had they asked themselves about the sources upon which they threw such rumors, they would have found themselves in a moral dilemma. Her negation of the accusation is even touched from her ironic laugh at her colleagues during their uncritical repetition of the rumors.

[55] Mary Ann Schwartz and BarBara Marliene Scott, *Marriages and Families: Diversity and Change* (New York: Pearson Education, 2018), p. 64.

The verification process is represented to be almost absent as an indication to how the patriarchal society is almost mobilized by stereotypes and rumors about women. For instance, Hiyam's aunt, Samira, is socially shamed for being divorced. Had they fairly investigated the reasons behind her divorce, she would have been honored and even iconized. They would find out that she was divorced because of her rejection to be turned to a male property or to be coerced to continue in an unfair and non-reciprocal relationship. Hence, her divorce would be read as a sign of freedom and self-determination rather than as an epitome of vulnerability and shame. Being involved in work outside her house till late evening, the stereotypes constructed about her as a divorcee is intermixed with rumors of dishonor intended to control her social mobility.

The influence of such rumors reaches even to her daughter for her sake she performs extra work to help support her education. In a dialogue between Samira and her daughter, the latter is seen expressing her resentment towards the former and overloading her with people's gossips and rumors besides being hardly loaded by day and night labor. The former, in response, takes the latter to the space where she works to prove that her labor is not by any means shameful or dishonorable although it is socially constructed as menial and marker of the low social status. Having armed with self-confidence, Samira turns a deaf ear to both rumors and hierarchal standards, because she realizes that it is difficult, if impossible, to control what people say. Therefore, she devotes her time to her work rather than to negating the rumors and scandals that are frequently created by the patriarchal society. Here, the director shows women's potential to diversify their strategies of resistance to fit the context in which they live; she concretely refutes the rumors for her daughter, while selecting ignorant style and carelessness to what others used to rumor about women who dare to break gender standards.

The circumstances under which the rumors about Hiyam's honor are constructed and circulated differ from that of her aunt's ones. In Hiyam's case, the rumors are constructed on the ground of a pregnancy test found by the factory's boss. Hiyam then gets framed for her dare to voice out her love and emotions towards her would-be lover. What helps reinforce the suspicion and doubts about her honor is that she has simultaneously experienced suspension of her menstrual cycle and symptoms of vomiting. Within such surroundings, her family's honor is represented to be tarnished by the gossips and rumors about her chastity. Therefore, the consequences of such rumors become devastating. This unfolds in the sore pain inflected on her

by her mother and her grandmother as well as her male relatives in attempts to cleanse the unchecked shame. Figure 6 below represents just a case in point.

Figure 6. Hiyam's grandmother places her foot on her face (Khan, *Factory Girl*, 2014).

In this figure, Hiyam's grandmother is seen mercilessly trampling her under her foot. She is simultenously shearing her hair with scissors so as to defeminize her as stigmatizing mark. Her grandmother's foot symbolizes the foot of the patriarchal society that tries to tightly keep women under control, deter their social mobility and freedom of choice and deal with their dream as illegitimate, simply because they are socially coded as an epitome of shame. Through these images, the filmmaker carries out severe condemnation of the historical system of patriarchy, which favors unjust tradition over human's rights. Nevertheless, far from essentialism, Khan portrays patriarchy as a mode of thought rather than as a confrontation between two blocs: man versus woman.

Despite of becoming painfully besieged by oppression, her revolutionary spirit prevents her from succumbing or bowing to the dominant ideology. In a meeting held in the café shop between her would-be lover and her, she, with a sense of dignity and self-esteem, proves to him that a woman's voice is not by any means a shame. Her talk is concurrently backgrounded by a mass demonstration reverberating revolutionary mottoes, among them "a woman's voice is a

revolution, and not a shame."[56] In so doing, the director works for a re-conceptualization of social change from women's perspectives, because he relates women's oppression to the larger oppression of the state and her liberation to the larger liberation of the entire masses. Consequently, her rebellious acts to reshuffle hierarchal standards that attribute honor and social status on gender and class basis coincide with the marginalized people's attempts to revolutionize against political oppression. That is, the systems of social injustice echo each other, and so do the struggles for social justice.

Here, the director highly celebrates woman's revolutionary spirit through iconizing Hiyam's voice of resistance. Hiyam is to be entrusted to pioneer social change for her pursuing to transform man-woman relationship from the circle of shame into the arena of human interaction that is based on verified identification and fair negotiation. Further, her role looks like that of a social reformist in the sense that she is seen trying to undo class and gender disparity, change other-oriented consciousness into self-oriented consciousness and replace culture of gossips and rumors with the culture of verification and investigation. Being swallowed by class and gender hierarchy, oriented by his mother's consciousness and driven by unchecked rumors, Salah's sense of superiority is ridiculed and portrayed as an empty claim. By contrast, the camera, throughout the film, shows her surpassing him in every respect, spiritual, moral and human. As further evidence to what have been previously illustrated, when her would-be lover is forcibly dragged by her relatives to marry her for the sake of cleansing the family's shame, she prefers to commit a suicide rather than to be stripped out of her dignity and self-esteem or be driven into coerced and non-reciprocal relationship.

Her attempt to commit suicide is not identified in the film as a self-destruction. Rather it has political potential partly as a revolutionary act against patriarchal domestication and partly as an opportunity to revisit the standards of honor that are unjustly based on social structural factors such as gender, class or low-status occupation. On the consequence of such failed suicide, she is taken to the hospital where the disseminators of rumors and those who are mobilized by them are condemned and deemed incredible as soon as they know that she is still a virgin. Her triumph over the rumors and scandals is not by any means a triumph of women over men, because such rumors are constructed and disseminated by women and the pain inflicted upon her is almost exercised by them. Thus, incompatible to the radical feminists' perception of patriarchy as the

[56] Khan, *Fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl).

domination of women by men,[57] patriarchy is observed in the film in the power relations between Salah and his dominating mother as well as between Hiyam and her female counterparts and relatives. This means that women do contribute to the reproduction of patriarchy whose victims are not preconditioned to be always women.

In this context, Hiyam's triumph is to be considered as a triumph of human values of love, emotional freedom, verification, and consciousness over the impulses of selfishness or hatred, emotional repression, fabrication, and false ideology. The last scene of the film proves that Hiyam's love for Salah is driven by the spirit rather than by the flesh. This scene shows her confidently and unbeatably dancing on the stage of Salah and his bride in their wedding ceremony. In his analysis of the Moroccan film *Badis* by M A Tazi, T. Khannous suggests that the subaltern women's dance functions as "a means of distancing themselves from the oppressive male figures and of coming to terms with their identity."[58] In Khan's film, the message of love and hope is communicated not only visually through Hiyam's elegant dance that is flavored with the glory of her victory over various kinds of discriminations, but also verbally through Om Kulthum's famous song, urging people to celebrate the values of love with a brilliant smile to the surrounding world. Such visual and verbal coincidence helps promote the message of love as an essence of humanity. All the audience, including Salah, his mother, sister and bride, are seen shocked and sagged by her spiritual beauty. They appear to become aware of being falsely deluded by the stereotypes based on the assumed superiority of certain class and gender. This indicates the potential of the bond of love to transform class and gender consciousness into human consciousness. That is, she disclaims the stereotypes and rumors affixed to the lower class-working women. Consequently, she relocates the hierarchal divisions by showing the possibilities of the marginalized to surpass, in many respects, those who are dominantly recognized as superior.

To conclude, women's struggle against emotional repression is depicted to go side by side with their quest for economic independence. Although they are disempowered on the material level, they are profoundly empowered on the spiritual one. It is their spiritual power that helps them overcome the melancholy of the hierarchal surrounding world and pushes them to impose

[57] See Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 19.

[58] Touria Khannous, "Themes of female imprisonment and rebellion: M.A. Tazi's film Badis," *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, December 2010, p. 459, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2010.486145>.

their existence as independent human beings. Both single and married women as well as widow and divorced are seen committed to secure an independent source of income. Though the factory girl, Hiyam, comes from lower class background with little education as the title of film suggests, she, along with her female counterparts, faces the limited opportunities and makes living by herself. Likewise, her mother works as a sale vendor of Chinese clothes and her widowed aunt provides telephone shop work in the morning and extensive paid household labor at night so as to ensure financial independence. The feminization of the workspace signifies, on the one hand, the incapability of the patriarchal system to exclude women from labor market or turn them invisible because of their important role in the industrial economy and because of their resistance. On the other hand, women's struggle for economic independence is depicted as indispensable step for their liberation. Further, the lower-working women are portrayed in the film as agents of social reforms, because they perceive the world from human vintage points, which transcend the narrow class and gender identification.

Conclusion

The idea of resistance articulated in the above-analyzed films works in twofold. First, these films provide respectively critiques of all forms of narrow consciousness like Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism and gender and class stratification. Second, they provide multiculturalism, social and human consciousness and gender and class equality as justice-based alternatives that help create the culture of mutual recognition. In other words, these films expose the oppressive tropes of the dominant powers and then rearticulate them in non-hegemonic ways. The Egyptian films under discussion emphasize the argument stressed by Michel Foucault, Sara Mills, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, among others, that power cannot be possessed, but rather questioned, challenged and even changed. The complexity and slippery nature of power relations is supposed to compel all the conflicting individuals and parties to favor the politics of inclusion over exclusion, multiculturalism over Eurocentrism or ethnocentrism and symmetrical over asymmetrical relationships.

Chahine's *Alexandria . . . New York* explores the image of the United States that has been so far confusing to the Arab world through bringing into discussion the interrelated questions of American racism, capitalism and imperialism. Chahine alters the naïve perception of America as

a space open to the cultural Other's liberty and upper mobility through historicizing its Eurocentric and imperial stances against the oppressed both abroad and at home, which becomes nowadays more threatening to the process of reconciliation than before. Through a journey back and forth, Chahine presents a lot of the Eurocentric positions he has encountered in the United States whose climax is represented by his American son's absolute refusal to accept him as a father despite all the overtures of reconciliation, simply because he is an Arab. Likewise, this film rectifies the Eurocentric representation of the Arab world as a space of either backwardness or threat. The cosmopolitan boy, Yahya/Chahine, who comes from a place heavily stereotyped by Western media, proves, however, to be more open, multitalented and supreme than all his American counterparts. The stereotypical image of the Oriental space as a mere classical folklore or archeological collections is refuted by bringing to the fore the cultural legacy of Alexandria as a space of artistic and intellectual inspiration. In so doing, Chahine attempts to cure the superiority complex of those who imagine artistry and creativity to be exclusive to specific race or to be bound by geographical, racial, religious or any other constructed border.

Having brought to the fore the glorious history of Egypt and, symbolically, the Arab world that has been so far distorted by colonial discourse does never mean that Chahine looks at Egypt or the Arab world through ethnocentric lenses. His second film under analysis, *Chaos*, discusses the practices of corruption and chaos in the Egyptian context along the lines of the executive sector, political parties, educational system, religious ideologies, and familial kinship, laying bare how their distance from social and human consciousness have significantly led to the emergence and development of the current regression. Corruption and chaos are inculcated and maintained in the film not only through the help of police and army, but also through the dissemination of ignorance. For example, the members of the ruling Nationalist Party and Islamist Party are seen not merely fetishizing their Parties, but also turning them into idols. While the national elitists perceive themselves as the exclusive representatives of Egypt, the Muslim brothers propagates themselves as the exclusive representatives of Islam. Thus, the film locates the agency of resistance in those who keep skeptical and critical to what is said or promoted by both, because they can hardly ever be led by narrow-minded ideologies, be they packaged in religious or secular milieus.

The third film *Factory Girl* by Khan critiques the patriarchal discourse, which discriminates the subaltern people on the basis of gender and class identification, and advances

an alternative view of social relations premised on the notion of reciprocal recognition. The film director selects the triple means of love, hope and work as strategic options to resist class and gender divisions. He locates the agency of change in the working class women, because their socially lower-constructed position could not turn them fragile or render them depressive or pessimistic; they are seen full of vitality, hope and spiritual power, shifting misery into felicity and turning material deprivation into spiritual richness. By contrast, the film unloads the middle class Salah from his worth by portraying him as oscillated and submissive to hierarchal traditions, which get him more prone to suffer from psychological and social seclusion as he is almost shot in narrow spaces. The feminization of the workspace signifies the incapability of patriarchal system to exclude women from labor market or turn them invisible. After tracing multi-facets of resistance in the Egyptian cinema, the next chapter scrutinizes the Moroccan films' response to the Eurocentric historicizing, the political imprisonment and gender oppression through form and content analysis of three selected films.

CHAPTER 2: Resistance in Contemporary Moroccan Cinema: Counter-telling of Colonialist and Nationalist Historiography

Introduction

The films analyzed in the previous chapter have some links with the films that are going to be discussed in this chapter. All of them intersect in the aspects of rethinking the hegemonic discourses through giving much space to the voices that have been oppressed, distorted and excluded by colonial, neocolonial, national, patriarchal and other dominating powers. Furthermore, they all employ, although to varying degrees, specific cinematic devices—notably close-up on human face and gaze, camera angle and movement, lighting, cutting, sound and music—and make use of literary and theatrical adaptations to communicate the complex operation of resistance. However, Moroccan films appear to be more restrictive in the thematic focus and more poetic in style than their Egyptian and Yemeni counterparts. The eloquence of the cinematic language will be brought into focus while analyzing the theme of resistance in the Moroccan filmic discourses under study.

While the previous chapter has synthesized the resistance to the Americentrism, the third world's despotism and ethnocentrism with the struggle against the capitalist patriarchy in complementary analysis embracing both form and content, this chapter is entirely devoted to discussing the Moroccan cinematic response to the experience of oppression through a selective analysis of three films. The films chosen to be analyzed, here, are Saad Chraibi's *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000), Jilali Ferhati's *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention, 2004) and Hamid Zoughi's *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal, 2008). These films question the cinematic narratives of the colonial, national and patriarchal historiographies by bringing the voices of the colonized, the political detainees, and revolutionary woman into the spot. In other words, this chapter tries to answer the following questions: In what ways do the cinematic discourses under study answer back to the colonial and mainstream historiographies? What are the means of resistance in these films and how they are legitimized? That is, what are the characteristics of resistance in the Moroccan filmic discourses under analysis? These questions are going to be discussed through the analysis of the formal and content components of the following three films.

2.1. Relocating Colonial Agency and Transcending National Consciousness in Chraibi's *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000)

Saad Chraibi is one of the representative figures of Moroccan cinema, and he is considered as one of the best known Moroccan filmmakers.[1] Chraibi has been working in the cinematic field as a director, scenarist and producer since 1978.[2] The cinema projects he always works on are social themes, as Chraibi affirms in an interview with Pamela Nice.[3] On the one hand, he tries to trace the historical, socio-cultural and political transformations, taking place in Moroccan society. On the other hand, he attempts to give voice to the forgotten and oppressed through addressing women's emancipation, historical memory of the Moroccan anti-colonial resistance and political imprisonment during the so-called 'lead years'. These issues are respectively exemplified in his films *Nisa' . . . wa Nisa'* (Women . . . and Women 1998), *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000), and *Jawhra Bint al-Habs* (Jawhra: Girl of the Prison 2003).[4]

The film *Thirst* is grounded on the struggle over water through which the filmmaker tries to map the French colonial oppression and the plural resistance of the Moroccan colonized. Many scenes, in the film, depict the colonial presence in the southern Morocco, Tinejdad, and the drought and starvation it has brought to the native lives. The film links the thirst for water with the thirst for love and freedom. It follows a love story between couple, Moh and Menna, who mutually endeavor to gain each other. These two lovers are presented in the film as workers—the former as a gardener and the latter as a cook—who provide low-paid servitude to a French lieutenant depicted in the film as a symbol of the French colonialist power. The couple realize that their work with the French colonizer cannot set them free. Driven by the desire for liberation, they engage, together with the nationalists, in the battle against the French colonial domination so as to impose their recognition and hence their right of independence. However, because of not belonging to the nationalist movement, Moh is accused, at the end of the film, as a betrayer of the national ideals and accordingly assassinated.

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[1] See Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca*, p. 387.

[2] See Pamela Nice, "Saad Chraibi: L'amoureur du cinema: an Interview with Chraibi," trans. Kabil Kahlaouy, *Al Jadid*, vol. 10, no. 49, 2004.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The English translation of the titles of these films is taken from Ginsberg and Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, p. 92.

In the previously analyzed film *Alexandria . . . New York* by Chahine, the Eurocentric construction of the United States as a destination of equality, liberty and upper mobility and the essentialist reduction of the Arab world to an entity of either backwardness or threat are profoundly refuted and challenged by a counter-hegemonic and counter-stereotypic discourse. In other words, what have been represented in Western movies and TVs as a land of liberation, openness and democracy turn in Chahine's film into a space of exclusion, racism and imperialism. Chahine also undermines the Western claim of holding monopoly on scientific supremacy and intelligence by showing that the Arab person who comes from an oriental space represented in Eurocentric discourse as unfamiliar, backward or threatening proves to be more familiar, supreme and impressive than his American colleagues. In a similar vein, the Moroccan film *Thirst* by Chraibi refutes the French colonial claims of having brought civilizing mission to the Moroccan colonies. It shows that the coming of the French colonizer has brought about starvation, drought and violence, which, in response, generates counter-violence and counter-exploitation. The colonized's violent revolt is legitimized as a necessary response to the colonizer's oppression. The film features the excesses of the colonial racism so as to stress the need for non-hegemonic relationships. It also tries to restore the agency of the subaltern groups, who work outside the frame of the national movement, by recognizing their effective participation in the anti-colonial struggle. These issues are going to be problematized in the pages that follow.

The film introduces the viewers to a water-starved village whose local inhabitants are seen fighting for existence and freedom during the era of French colonialism. It opens with a melancholic long take[5] tracking the drought and hunger brought by the French colonizers to a village of southern Morocco, Tinejdad. The camera's mapping of the deserted village is accompanied by a sad voiceover conveyed in a poetic style to give psychological depth to the native sufferings. The camera cuts from a medium wide shot of Moh's uncle Zayd sitting in contemplation under a tree to an extreme close-up registering the sufferings written on his pale and sad face. However, his spirit appears unbeatable as it is signified by his upraised head and his defiant gaze. Shot from a low angle perspective, the image foretells that he

[5] A long take is a single prolonged capturing of profilmic events where the story unfolds in one sound location before a cut happens and transports the viewer(s) somewhere else. It serves, here, to place the film in its historical context and to authenticate the film narrative. Being presented with voice-over comments, the long take shot calls the viewers to draw their attention not only to what they see, but also to what they hear, since the voice-over narration breathes life into the image. For Further insightful and comprehensive information about long takes, see Lutz Koepnick, *The Long Take: Art Cinema and the Wondrous* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

cannot bow his head to the unjust practices of the colonizer whatever the consequences might be.

To highlight the exploitative nature of colonialism, the camera switches back to a deep depth of field[6] to capture the thirst of land, animals and populations for water. It then cuts to a group of boys chasing one of their friends who has a jar of water as an indication of the traumatic consequences of colonialism represented by looting all the wealth of the occupied territory, starting with water. The description of the excessive sufferings of the natives and their struggle for water is most probably chosen by the film director, on the one hand, to write back to the Western narratives that celebrate the 'civilizing mission' French claims to have brought to Morocco.[7] On the other hand, such description is used to justify the colonized people's thirst for independence, as the title of the film suggests, and to endorse their violent response as a legitimate and necessary reaction to the colonizer's exploitation and oppression. That is, the natives' struggle for water symbolizes that they are fighting for existence.

To subvert the colonial essentialist image of the Moroccan natives as violent and fanatic, the film opens with a special love story between two Moroccan workers, Moh and Menna, who serve in the French lieutenant's house. The camera displays them flirting with each other through moving and zooming from one person to another. In its projection of the two lovers in such way, the camera constructs their thirst for love and life and, symbolically, for freedom and liberation. In other words, the film uses the romantic love story to signify that the colonized resistance comes as a necessary response to the daily exploitation and structural oppression of colonialism.

Because of being exploited by the French employer, Moh—one of the major characters in the film—sees, as Fanon argues, that his labor in the lieutenant's house can never set him free. As in the case of Fanon's master-slave dialectics, the colonized Moh finds no liberation in his work. Therefore, he cannot simply remain in the places assigned for him by the colonizer. Compatible with what Fanon argues, Moh recognizes that the colonizer's skin is of no more value than his own skin till he accepts his pillage. Upon such realization, he sets

[6] A deep depth of field or what is referred to as a deep-focus shot occurs when all objects in front of the camera, from the foreground to the background, are in focus. It is used to show the relation between the figures recorded in the shot. See, for example, Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, pp. 74-75.

[7] For example, in her account in *In Morocco*, the American novelist Edith Wharton attempts to promote the infrastructure and the civilizing influences that General Lyautey, as she claims, has brought to Morocco. She states that by the virtue of Lyautey, "the country . . . is safe and open as the opposite shore of Spain." Edith Wharton, *In Morocco* (Fes: The Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, 2005), p. 18.

out to turn the table on the French colonizer; he engages in sabotaging the engines the colonizers use for water pumping. Through this act, Moh tries to bridge the polarized gap between the colonized who suffer drought and starvation and the colonizers who live in luxury at the expense of the native sufferings. In other words, he decides to put an end for the colonial occupation. This reflects, as Guha argues, that the subaltern subjects are self-conscious of the conditions of their exploitation and oppression. The subaltern subject Moh is not mobilized by the consciousness of the nationalist elites, as Spivak assumes. On the contrary, the nationalist elites are seen eager to coordinate with him, support and even adopt his methodology in resistance. Here, the anticolonial resistance is depicted as more plural and diverse than the mainstream narratives try to represent. In so doing, the film tries to recognize the significant role the marginalized and minority groups have played in the anti-colonial struggle.

Comparing the subaltern voices in this film to that of the Egyptian film *Chaos* by Chahine, we find out that the common thread between their resistances is that they are not mobilized by the elite consciousness. The film *Chaos,* as it is analyzed in the previous section, displays the marginalized people as active players in the revolution against the authoritarian regime. The camera zooms in to their angry faces during their oppression as well as during their uprising so as to confirm that they are mobilized by their thirst to release themselves from the load of accumulated oppression. Likewise, the camera, in the film *Thirst*, penetrates the psyche of the individuals like Moh, his wife, his mother and his uncle, Zayd, to show how the French colonial oppression has awaken their social and human consciousness as equally as it has awaken the national consciousness of the popular masses. Such consciousness has pushed them to unite their outcries against the colonizer. In so doing, oppression is seen as the main stimulation behind mobilization and resistance against both colonialism and totalitarian nationalism.

The film director makes it clear that the villagers' resistance comes as a response to the colonial racism and exploitation. The colonized people are aware that the colonizer comes to extract their material interests. French colonialism is seen bringing about two dichotomous worlds saturated with reciprocal exclusivity. It is seen dividing the colonial world into two unequal compartments: the colonial garden and the dry native village as shown in figure 7 and 8. Such racial oppression brings about "class division, the exploitation of labor, and

social hierarchies of status,"[8] to use Homi Bhabha's words. In agreement with Fanon, these figures show how colonialism divides the world into exclusively unequal parts, which widen the gap between human species. Such kind of racial division is imposed by violence. Accordingly, the colonized's counter-violence becomes a legitimate and indispensable response to the logics of colonialism.

Figure 7. Life of Moh and his Father in their water-starved village (Chraibi, *Thirst*, 2000).

Figure 8. Life of the French Lieutenant and his wife in their green garden (Chraibi, *Thirst*, 2000).

The above figures show how colonialism strives to control the source of economic power. The French occupation has deprived the natives of irrigation resources for their agricultural fields. The colonizer brings with him modern technologies by which he dries up the wells and streams of the native villagers. Thus, he becomes a profound threat to their water and food security. To counter the colonizers' mechanisms of oppression and exploitation, the natives wage a battle on various levels. On the cultural level, they, for example, reject to acculturate to the cultural codes of the colonial power. The image on the left shows Moh and his father to have been unaffected by the colonial fashion of the time, as it is manifest in the preservation of their traditional clothes. They maintain links with the indigenous lifestyles of their ancestors and, symbolically, with their identity as a sign of resistance against the cultural domination. On the economic level, they have deliberately blown the source that stands behind their suffering as it will be illustrated in the next page. As stated before, the colonizer brings with him water pumps to loot the water. This, in turn, has dried up the natives' wells

[8] Homi Bhabha, "Forward: Framing Fanon," in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched o the Earth*, trans. Richard philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p. xx.

and valleys. The camera shows Moh's father complaining to him the thirst that the colonizer has brought to their lands.

Being depicted throughout the film as a man of principles, Moh at first hesitates to assent to his Uncle's proposal of sabotaging the water pumps. But, when he is convinced that such act can serve the interests of the whole villagers and force the colonizer to leave their country, he voluntarily accepts the idea and sets out to perform it, as shown in figures 9a & b. In the image on the left, the Moroccan native seems to be fostered by a burning desire for liberation; this is obviously seen in his rebellious eyes. He is fearlessly shown clothing his aggressiveness and carrying out a detrimental attack on the pump. In a close-up, the camera shows him courageously carrying the firewood and confidently blowing the pump. The spirit of insurgency is written on his face and particularly on his audacious gaze. The scene of explosion is lit by low-key lighting to menace the colonizer of the unknown. As the film is grounded on the struggle over water, the individual protagonist, Moh, seems aware that the colonial pumps bring about a world of unequal compartments. So, he willingly sets to bridge such unequal division by sabotaging the main source of the colonial irrigation, as shown in the image on the right.

Figure 9a & b. Moh explodes the pump (Chraibi, *Thirst*, 2000).

In so doing, the film director tries to convey that the anti-colonial struggle is not to be exclusively seen as a conflict between two blocs: the nationalists and colonialists. As a case in point, the protagonist, Moh, does not belong to the nationalist movement. Yet, his

contribution to the struggle against French colonialism cannot be understated. This calls us to recognize the individuals' participation in the process of decolonization. In this way, the film reinforces the politics of recognition in the sense that it celebrates the significant roles of the marginalized and minority voices, who work outside the frame of the national elitists, in the anti-colonial resistance. Here, we are reminded of Fanon's and Said's insistence to go beyond the national consciousness in order to accommodate the voices of the individual actors and minority groups. In this regard, the film can be read as a deconstruction of both colonial and narrowly national discourses.

Moreover, Moh's struggle for liberation is clearly depicted as a result of his self-consciousness rather than of being mobilized by that of the national elites. In addition to his voluntary desire to release his people from the different layers of exploitation inflicted on them by the colonizers, Moh also attempts to release some repression inside him in the sense that he is not satisfied to be poorly treated on the ground of race. This is evidenced in his complaining to his uncle, Zayd, about being heavily employed in low-paid manual labor by the French colonizer. He at first decides to leave this job and immigrate to the city. Yet, because of his sympathy with the people of his countryside and his thirst for liberation, Moh prefers to remain in the village to counter the colonial exploitation. He recurrently carries out rebellious and violent attacks on the colonizer's water pumps in order to put an end to his manipulative and cunning practices. In this context, the film holds Fanon's conviction of the value of violence in the struggle for independence. Fanon clearly states that "the unprivileged and starving peasant is the exploited who very soon discovers that only violence pays."[9]

If the attack on the water pumps has been asserted, in colonial texts, as a kind of religious fanaticism or of committing atrocities, the film director considers such violent act as a form of resistance by which the colonized seeks to punish his oppressor and put more pressure on him. In this regard, the validity of Fanon's theory of violence and counter-violence, which I invoked earlier in the theoretical chapter, unfolds clearly in this film; the exploitation of the colonizers is effectively encountered by the counter-exploitation of the native. Because "action from one side only would be useless,"[10] the indigenous people have become aware that the one-sided recognition cannot work and they have to reply to the power that keeps oppressing them in order to create a world of mutual recognition. In addition, the

[9] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Eart,* trans. Richard Philcox. (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p. 23.

[10] Quoted in Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 169.

protagonist of the film, Moh, discovers that the colonialist's skin is no more worth than his skin. "This discovery", as Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "shakes the world in a very necessary manner."[11]Thus, the colonized sets out to put an end to the colonial occupation. He wants to be seen as a subject, but the colonizer cannot grant him such recognition. Therefore, he resorts to the sabotage of the pump to starve the colonizer and hence coerce him to leave their country. Counter-violence works here as a cleansing force, which purifies the colonized from his inferiority complex and, thus transform his/her objecthood to subjecthood.

Significantly enough, Moh's act of explosion is seen appreciated by the nationalists. They are shown coordinating with him to carry out further attack. They are depicted as eager to use his rebellion and perform wider attack on the engines of the water pumps. In the solace sequence, the camera cuts to the nationalists and Moh while they are sitting together. In this scene, the nationalists are seen coordinating with Moh to penetrate the lieutenant's office and attack the telegraph in order to stop sending messages to the metropolitan center. This scene profoundly subverts the idea of the colonized as backward. It, rather, confirms the effective functioning of their cognitive and planning capacity that enables them to carry out different forms of resistance for the sake of paving the way for a world of mutual recognition, as Fanon argues. This goes with Guha's argument that the subaltern subject is not mobilized by another consciousness. That is to say, the anti-colonial subaltern subjects like Moh and his uncle Zayd are seen as aware of the conditions of their oppressions as those of the nationalists. Their resistance is primarily driven by religious, social and human consciousness. It is on this account that they prepare such rebellious exploding attacks on the colonizer's source of water so as to destabilize the politics of exclusion and exploitation. Instead of being mobilized by the nationalist elites, the film shows that Moh's rebellious acts inspire the anti-colonial nationalists and push them to eagerly adopt his strategy.

In spite of highlighting the starvation French colonialism has brought to Morocco and its people, the film avoids demonizing or stereotyping the colonial people because the director seems aware that "the answer to a stereotype is not, of course, a negative stereotype."[12] In other words, the filmmaker appears to be interested in the relocation of colonial construction of the cultural other, rather than in reversing the same stereotypical discourse. Reasonably, a film produced in 2000 to discuss the issues of the fiftieth seems not intending to demonize the cultural Other or mobilize mass population against it. Rather, it

[11] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 45.
[12] Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture*, p. 294.

aims to interrogate the imperial history "for what it did to native peoples, immigrant populations, oppressed minorities."[13]

Although the film director turns the claims that have been promoted in the colonialist-Eurocentric discourse upside down and suggests the counter-violence as the most appropriate means of the anti-colonial resistance, he brings forth the possibility of reconciliation. The declaration of the Moroccan independence opens up the space for reconciliation with the French system. The best example demonstrating this point is the scene that occurs at the end of the film, which shows the departure of colonialism. In this scene, the triumphant natives are shown shaking hands with the French lieutenant. Moreover, the lieutenant's wife is seen lamenting the farewell of Moroccans as it is expressed in her tears. In this way, the filmmaker tries to deconstruct the colonial representations that depict natives as eager to take revenge because this scene demonstrates that they are yearning for independence and liberation and never for taking revenge.

Drawing on the idea that the meaning is relational, the film director seems aware that the meaning of thirst can make sense only in its relation to water, and death can make more sense when it is related to birth. The death of Moh's father is simultaneously seen coincided with the birth of his son, and both incidents are concurred with the rain fall. This duality of death and birth conveys that the colonized are symbolically put between two choices: either to succumb to the colonizers' domination and exploitation, which symbolically might be seen as equal to death; or to fight for freedom and liberation, which signifies the rebirth of a new life full of hope. That is, the starvation that the colonizers brought to their land can stand for death, while the anti-colonial resistance can symbolize the birth of hope and dream for a new life. The coincidence of death and birth in the film—the death of one generation and the birth of the next— might symbolize the rejuvenation of the anti-colonial resistance. In so doing, the director links the past not only with the present, but also with the future. The rain fall also foresees that the independence is about to happen and the era of exploitation will be nearly left out. As further evidence, the rain scene is followed by the grass of the earth and then with the sunset and moonrise respectively.

More interestingly, unlike the colonial narratives that portray the native prisoners as submissive and lacking logical thinking, this film shows that the detainees enjoy the support of the people and never accept defeat. The camera moves to the prison to depict the incarceration of Moh and the anti-colonial nationalists who are arrested for being accused of

[13] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 195.

exploding the pumps. Though they are physically confined, their minds are still working. The camera displays them plotting and preparing for escape.

The politics of recognition of the individuals' roles in the anti-colonial struggle are much frequented in the film. In so doing, the film director wants to convey that the anti-colonial-struggle is multifaceted and independence is achieved by the multi-effort of the colonized people. As mentioned earlier, the film, besides portraying the important role the nationalists have played in the process of decolonization, highlights the significant role of the individuals such as Moh, his uncle Zayd, his wife and his mother as well. To explore the limitations of nationalism and expose its pitfalls, the camera displays an effective scene in which the man of principle and integrity, Moh, is lynched. He is detained and punished by the colonizer not simply for sabotaging the pumps, but his acts are also considered as betraying his employer, the French lieutenant. Likewise, because of his work in the lieutenant's house and of not belonging to the national movement, he is considered as a traitor to the national cause and then killed by the policy of accusation and betraying. The act of Moh's killing powerfully highlights the failure of orthodox nationalism to account for the particularities of the impoverished classes. Therefore, the construction of encompassing national identity, which celebrates the vital role of the non-privileged groups in the anti-colonial struggle and also in social reforms, can only be effected through the promotion of social consciousness. This goes in line with Fanon's and Said's assumption of the necessity to go beyond national consciousness to that of social and human consciousness. Otherwise the future will be a replication of one type of domination by another.

The film depicts how Moh's wife dares to break the cultural tradition by paying visits to her imprisoned husband. She challenges the patriarchal norms that try to confine her within the domestic space and restrict her freedom, because she is longing for liberating herself from both colonialism and patriarchy. Also, to avoid the pitfall of turning the anti-colonial resistance into a kind of nativism, the film does not homogenize the French; it depicts the lieutenant's wife as sympathetic to the native as the camera shoots her in several occasions: one occasion is when she tries to photograph the Moroccan teacher and build love affair with him and the second when she helps Menna to get into the prison to meet her husband. Her sympathy with the Moroccan natives appears also in her attempts to prevent her husband imprisoning Moh when they catch him trying to damage the telegraph.

The film makes it clear that resistance incorporates struggle and reconciliation and both of them are set forth by the desire for independence and liberation. At the end of the film, the film director moves towards creating the politics of mutual recognition. To evidence this, as I

previously mentioned, the camera shoots Moroccans while they are shaking hands with the lieutenant in a farewell moment held for him and his wife. This proves that the film director approaches anti-colonial resistance not as a mobilization of the Moroccan masses against France, but as a means for bringing just reconciliation between the colonized and the colonizer. In the post-independent era, Morocco is scripted not only as a home for the Self but also for the Other. In this regard, Chraibi follows the farewell scene by the speech of Mohammed V who addresses the Moroccan people as well as the French inhabitants, encouraging them to co-exist with each other on the basis of equal citizenship. In this regard, the film certainly epitomizes that Moroccan people are thirsty for love, freedom, and liberation rather than for taking revenge.

In sum, this film discusses the colonized's memory as resistance to the Western historicizing as well as essentialist national narratives. It emphasizes that nationalism should be vaccinated by social and human consciousness in order to be more inclusive, efficient and empowering of the marginalized and, to add, migrant's exile. The next film, *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention, 2004), goes partly in line with the current film in terms of its warning against turning nationalism to a form of authoritarian system. Like Chraibi's *Thirst*, Ferhati's *Memory in Detention* depicts the political detainees' memory as resistance against the attempts of oblivion. Both of them emphasize the importance of retelling the past traumas from a perspective that runs counter to the dominant narrations of history so as not to reproduce such oppressive practices in the present and even in the future. The core question is to identify how the film *Memory in Detention* addresses the internal repression of political activists and how it treats such problem, which seems to be a cyclical phenomenon all over the world. This is going to be examined in the next section.

2.2. Memory as Resistance to the Politics of Erasure: Recovering Repressed History in Ferhati's *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention, 2004)

Jilali Ferhati is a Moroccan film director and producer. He is also known as "an excellent actor of stage and screen."[14] His films are concerned with addressing the intricacies of marginality and social problems in Moroccan society like the victimization of women, the incarceration of political activists and human right abuses for the sake of establishing social reconciliation. Besides, he is considered as "one of the first Moroccan filmmakers to treat the

[14] Carter, "Moroccan Cinema," p. 148.

subject of clandestine migration, as well as the history of French residents in Morocco."[15] As Jamila Bargach elaborates, "Jilali Ferhati conceives of his role both as an artist and a social critic, the two roles being intimately intertwined."[16] In an interview held by Bargach, Ferhati considers art as a means of fighting for social justice, and the artist's role, for him, "is to criticize society not in an insidious manner but in a sane and constructive way."[17] His mode of critique and resistance is explored through the analysis of his film *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention, 2004).

The film *Memory in Detention* represents a quest or a call for the culture of recognition. It attempts to retrieve the historical archives of one of the political prisoners, Mokhtar Alyouni, who has been violently removed from the arena of political struggle when he was a teenager. That is, it tries to revisit the Moroccan past by reflecting the voices that have been effaced by violence and oppression. In this respect, the director plays the leading role of the political detainee Mokhtar who has experienced a long sentence till he becomes amnesiac. Upon his release from prison, the warden commands a young delinquent, Zoubeir, to help him search for his relatives. Mokhtar's life is full of a series of significant experiences. Before his arrest, he has engaged in a love affair with a Moroccan woman named Zahra. Mokhtar and Zahra have much in common. Both are political activists and they are working as teachers. Yet, repression separates them from each other where the former is detained and the latter is compelled to migrate to France.

The phenomenon of political imprisonment is a recurrent theme in Arab cinema.[18] In the above-analyzed film *Chaos*, the Egyptian director Youssef Chahine explores the problem of the political imprisonment in the Egyptian context. However, Unlike the Moroccan film under analysis in which such problem is resolved through the channels of reconciliation, the demands for the release of the political detainees in the Egyptian context are effectuated only

[15] Ibid., p.181.

[16] Jamila Bargach, *Orphans of Islam: Family, Abandonment, and Secret Adoption in Morocco* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p. 156.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Among the Arab films that discuss the issue of political imprisonment are, for example, the Tunisian films *Safayih min Dhahab* (Golden Horseshoes, 1989) by Nouri Bouzid, and *Lailat al-Sanawat al-'Ashr* (The Night of the Ten Years, 1990) by Brahim Babai, *al-Aswar* (Fences, 1979) by the Iraqi film director Mohamed Shokry Gamil, and *Al-Qal'at 'al-Khamisa* (The Fifth Cattle of the Prison, 1979) by the Syrian director Bilal al-Sabouni, to name just a few. This issue has been also a fertile field of study for Egyptian and Moroccan film directors whose films are so numerous to list here. One of the brilliant books that enlists textual and visual depictions of the global experiences of past political detention and torture to mobilize resistance to contemporary torture and dominant representation of it is *Speaking about Torture*, eds., Julie A. Carlson and Elisabeth Weber (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

by the protestors storming the police station in violent riot. Although the two films seem to have similar orientation represented by transforming national consciousness to that of human consciousness, they differ, to some extent, in terms of methodology. The scenes of violence, flogging, and torture that overwhelm Chahine's film *Chaos* are replaced, in Ferhati's *Memory in Detention*, with a poetic style that awakens us to contemplation and reconsideration. That is, the police's brutality against the political prisoners is given special focus as well as large space in the former film and it is discussed in relation to a wide network of corruption and chaos. By contrast, with the exception of one scene in which we see a political prisoner subjected to physical torture, the latter film tells a quiet, contemplative story of the suppressed memories of the so-called 'Lead Years'. It is exclusively devoted to exposing the pitfalls of the past in order not to take place again. However, the challenging question to be raised is how the complex interaction between the strategies of remembrance and the power of obliteration is problematized in the film. The answer to this question is going to be explored through the lenses of the political exile and detainees.

The first sequence of the film explores Zahra's, a political exile, returning back to her country, Morocco, after several years of forced migration. Her detention is signified by being distanced from her homeland and her lover. Thus, her returning back opens the door for regaining her painful memory as a route not for spurring hatred, but for fostering repair, reconciliation and sustainable peace. The director perceives the recovery of the suppressed memory as a key to a non-oppressive future. The film opens with an open frame shot[19] of the train station platform, panning towards the doorway where we see three children talking about a cardboard box. When the camera cuts to the box, we see that it contains old discarded letters. The camera, in arc shot, spins around such letters in a circular pattern to map the flowers surrounding them as a reminder of the value of the historical archive for documenting the past events. The on-screen narration reveals that they are love letters written by Mokhtar to his beloved Zahra. In a softly spoken voice, a female child reads aloud these lines:

> Zahra my flower, I remembered our first meeting and I found myself dyeing the walls of the cell with the color of the horizon. In that day, you told me about the people and the color of the sky. In that day, the blue of the sea and the blue of the horizon, the

[19] Open frame shot is one that calls attention to consider the space beyond the edge of the visible shot. That is, it relies on off-screen space for meaning. See Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier, *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics* (New York and London: Focal Press, 2013) p. 156.

only witnesses to the beings and history, were looking at you with confidence. You admired the city, whispered your love to me, played with fine sand and dreamt of happiness for all women. You were an activist with a flower name, Zahra![20]

The metaphoric equivalence between Zahra and the flower symbolizes that her activism has been peaceful, enlightening and beneficial. Being read by the female child reinforces that the addresser and addressee are as innocent as a child. Thus, incompatible with the official narratives that represent political dissidents as a subversive threat to the national security, the director perceives their activities and aspirations as legitimate and even essential for social reforms. Zahra's activism is depicted to be driven by the quest for citizenship and gender equality. The composer of the letter uses personification to embody not simply her noble aims, but also her hope and confidence to fulfill them, as she is celebrated by the blue of the sky and the blue of the sea. The on-screen narrator adds, "the day-night light will tell us when we become free birds, spreading our wings to the wind. And that day we will bear together the names of the universe, the names that bring life to the soul."[21] It is hinted that their wings were tied. Zahra was compelled to leave her country. She realized that the situation was hopeless and migration was required. While her imprisonment is expressed through her physical, psychological and political alienation of both her lover and her homeland, Mokhtar has been subjected to physical and mental imprisonment. He is exiled in his own homeland where he spends several years in the prison cell till he becomes amnesiac. However, his spirit is still pulsating with love and hope as signified by his act of "dyeing the walls of the cell with the color of the horizon."

The camera takes us to the prison in order to identify with this exceptional prisoner. It plays the role of a psychiatrist in the sense that it penetrates his psyche and displays his pains. He is seen behaving in a strange manner. Incomparable to other prisoners, he keeps planting, watering and caring for flowers as if the prison becomes his own world. The flowers refer to his sweetheart Zahra whom he could not connect with her in the real world. Thus, his symbolic caring for her from within the prison signifies his loyalty not simply for her as individual but more importantly for the principles that she has been fighting for. Further, this detainee is seen silent as if his voice was obliterated by drug. But, as the film is full of

[20] Jilali Ferhati, *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention), Heracles Production-MPS, 2004.

[21] Ibid.

symbolic images, his silence seems to be so complex that it could not be understood as a sign of weakness or submissiveness. His silence, on the one hand, can be interpreted as a refusal to subject to the prison authority's inquiries. On the other hand, his silence appears to speak louder than words in the sense that it captures his protest against torture and abuse as well as against the confinement of the freedom of expression and the rigor of censorship, which suppress cultural productions. More than that, his silence unveils a whole discourse of physical, psychological, political and cultural oppression that the prisoners have undergone.

As Gramsci and Althusser argue, the ruling systems frequently try to maintain their power through consent and/or coercion. Here, the ruling system resorts to what Althusser calls the "repressive state apparatus," represented by the police and prison, to domesticate the political activists and render them submissive. The director depicts the prison's torture that the political activists have undergone in order to convey that such torture becomes a part of their memory that time cannot obliterates. Lighting and sound effects add further depth to the sufferings of the prisoners. The spectators hear them groaning in enclosed rooms pervaded by darkness. To touch on the psychological and cognitive consequences of imprisonment, the director tries, from time to time, to unveil the protagonist's psychic wounds and how he suffers amnesia or might be forced to feel amnesiac as an escape of his deep pain. However, unlike Chahine's film *Chaos*, which is saturated by the scenes of brutal violence inflected on the political detainees, this is the only scene in Ferhati's *Memory in Detention* that presents the physical torture inside the prison cells.

Unexpectedly, when the warden sets him free, saying, "You cannot remain here. This is a prison, not a charity center,"[22] Mokhtar refuses to leave the prison because it becomes his own home. Unlike Zahra who returns back from exile in order to recover the memory of the political detainees from oblivion, Mokhtar does not seems to desire to face the painful past and revive the sad memory of his comrades whom his father had disclosed their names to the authority. Thus, to reside in his inner world becomes more preferable for him than to return to the outside world. Because he becomes with no family to claim him, the prison warden, commands the young delinquent, Zoubeir, to look for his relatives and to help him recover his memory. Brilliantly enough, Zoubeir utilizes the opportunity to find out from Mokhtar the truth about his own father's past. In a flashback, the camera displays Zoubeir's last memory of his father when he saw him dragged from his home. This denotes that memories can never be obliterated, since they "are not fixed, but are instead constantly being revised and rewritten

[22] Ibid.

each time they are recalled."[23] Put another way, whatever the attempts made by the dominant power to suppress the history of the oppressed, the repressed history always returns back. This returning back of the suppressed memory challenges the mainstream narrations of history and confronts them with an alternative accounts written from the point of view of the dominated class as it is reflected in the film.

To complicate the plot, the warden tells Zoubeir that there were two detainees in prison by the name of Mokhtar Alyouni. One was a political activist and the other a bank robber. One was released several years ago and the other is the amnesiac man whom the warden is now ordering Zoubeir to help him search for his family. The prison warden states that "we have no more political activists imprisoned in this country."[24] So, the one being released must be the political activist. This mistaken identity is clarified at the end when the spectators are told that Mokhtar the thief bribed Mokhtar the activist to give him his identity so as to get out of the prison. The latter readily agreed because he wanted to unburden himself from the guilt he felt for having revealed the list of the political activists' names to his father who, in turn, disclosed them to the authorities.

Though Zoubeir hesitates at the beginning to help the old man search for his family, he is later drawn to the project to unearth the truth about his father's and Mokhtar's past. Following addresses on empty envelopes Mokhtar kept in a box long time ago, Zoubeir and Mokhtar embark on a countrywide search to track people who may identify him. This scene is interrupted by a shift to Zahra while she is seen embarking on a strenuous search to find her lover. In so doing, the film makes it clear that men and women are partners on both interpersonal and societal levels. The recovery of the repressed and buried history is made efficacious by male and female. The director seems to say that we have to incorporate gendered perspectives to understand the process of social reforms. On this account, he tries to recover the lost past in order to "rectify the elitist biases characteristic of much research and academic works."[25]

The film director intends to empower the suppressed groups but in a non-hegemonic way. In this vein, the scene moves to show us the political detainee, Mokhtar, who is mostly seen watering flowers. This symbolic image signifies, on the one hand, his hope and longing for freedom and recognition since flower conveys the idea of peace and renovation. On the

[23] Nuha Baaqeel, *The Kaleidoscope of Gendered Memory in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's Novels* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), p. 92.

[24] Jilali Ferhati, *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah*.

[25] Ranajit Guha & Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 35.

other hand, it undermines the mainstream epistemology that either depicts political detainees as criminal or relegates them to the margin. The resistance articulated in the film does not render those political activists violent or aggressive. The director employs the flower imagery in the writing of his film to convey to viewers that the resistance he wants to articulate is the culture of recognition. Likewise, the camera displays Zahra, in the time the doves visit her veranda, reading messages that bear expressions of love and freedom. The film compares the voices of political activists to flowers and doves to signify that their voices are reasonable and constructive rather than unjust and destructive. Thus, the state violence contradicts with the principles of citizenship, and it would be also a short way to defeat or, at least, disempowerment. This poses the choice of tolerance and reconciliation as the best solution.

The film is full of symbolic images because it is composed in a poetic way. In addition to the imagery of watering flowers, the camera takes us back to the prison to recall Mokhtar's first memory of his past torture. It displays Mokhtar while he is cleansing his bloody nose. The recurrence of his bloody nose—which flows whenever he sees scenes of violence—seems not to be merely "a constant reminder of his past torture,"[26] as Orlando states, but also a call to delegitimize the torture and imprisonment without trial so as to stop such practices from being repeated again. Further, voicing the complaints of the political detainees represents a call for compensation. As the story of the film works backwards, from the present to the past, the picture is clarified at the end of the film. In a final flashback, the film director links Mokhtar's bloody nose of the present to his painful memory of the past when his head was bashed to a wall by two policemen who arrested him while he was teaching mathematics in the schoolroom as it is manifest respectively in figures 10 and 11.

[26] Orlando, *Screening Morocco*, p. 115.

Figure 10. Mokhtar's bloody nose of the present (Ferhati, *Memory in Detention*, 2004).

Figure 11. Mokhtar's bloody nose of the past (Ferhati, *Memory in Detention*, 2004).

These images represent the potential of memory to overcome the pressure of erasure or the power of obliteration of the hidden or repressed history in the sense that the film's protagonist succeeds in regaining his imprisoned memory and hence the repressed history. In addition, the filmmaker may purposefully ends his film by Mokhtar's recovery of his lost memory, and symbolically of the collective history of the subaltern people, in the classroom space in order to highlight the potential of the cultural space to dismantle cultural hegemony. That is, the space can signify the vital importance of literacy and education in the process of creating cultural awareness among the coming generation.

Another symbolic image which recurrently occurs in the film is Mokhtar's blowing the dust of his fingers. This symbolizes his desire to get rid of the defects of the past and its oppressive practices through crafting counter-hegemonic knowledge. In other words, the filmmaker talks about the past not because of being nostalgic to it, but to change the present. He tries to turn down the repressive pages of the past and turn on new non-coercive pages in which the marginalized voices are acknowledged and their stories are perceived as an alternative understanding of human history.

The film also compares the prison life to the outside world through the camera's movement from the space of confinement and the center of torture, the prison, to the space of freedom which Zahra enjoys. While Mokhtar is seen silent and caged in the prison, Zahra is shown in an open place frequented by pigeons as she is reciting a letter Mokhtar wrote to her earlier. This letter reveals to us the reason behind his imprisonment and links the cause of his detention to "characters from our time that repressed our dream simply because we

established sanctuary and promised to live and die for the sake of freedom."[27] Despite the fact that they occupy different physical spaces, their concerns and even their spiritual pains are quite common. In this regard, resistance becomes a necessary option to bring back the repressed history in order to establish a real process of reconciliation.

Throughout the film, the viewers can see how Mokhtar reconstructs his identity through a struggle over memory. He constitutes a liberating identity that resists domestication, oppression and obliteration since such identity is driven by the desire for democracy, justice and equality. So, this film seems to be "a reminder of the capacity for resistance that human beings possess when they understand why they are being persecuted and how thoughtful action might bring that persecution to an end."[28]

In an effort to symbolically fill the memory gap of the political prisoner, the film displays Zoubeir's efforts to help him retrace his steps in order to relive the memory of the buried past. As aspiring character, Zoubeir, at first, narrates to him the detaining story of his own father and presents to him his image hopefully he could identify him. Then he takes him to his father's graveyard. Surprisingly, Mokhtar is shown imagining the flower he was irrigating in the prison instead of remembering the death. This employs that he is optimistic about the future and he still has hope and dream for the coming generations.

Moreover, Zoubeir, who plays the role of the psychiatrist as well as of the theatre actor, gives him several lectures in order to bridge the gap in his memory. For example, Zoubeir takes him to the café where they watch TV news that displays a demonstration. In order to help him recall his political activities, Zoubeir says to him that "people who demand their rights and organize demonstrations are called vandals."[29] Parallel to this example, Zoubeir reads loudly news clippings to Mokhtar that describes Morocco's ongoing effort to reform the abuses of the Lead Years and to compensate the political detainees through human rights organization. These strategies of remembrance represent powerful tools to rectify the elitist historiographies.

The most important lessons that help him recover his memory are portrayed at the end of the film. One of them is using the politics of blaming. After Zoubeir has definitely known that Mokhtar the amnesiac is the political activist, he blames him for depriving the other political activists from their families, saying: "You deprived them from their families . . .

[27] Ferhati, dir., *Dhakirah Mou'taqalah* (Memory in Detention).

[28] Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, ed. Frank Rosengarten, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Colombia University Press, 1994), pp. 2-3.

[29] Ferhati, dir., *Dhakirah Mou'taqalah* (Memory in Detention).

Two days after you had been imprisoned, you dragged them one by one."[30] Zoubeir's psychological session helps Mokhtar restore his memory since the camera displays the latter weeping when he recalls his unintentionally committed sin. At the same moment, Mokhtar takes out some chalks of his pocket and writes the names of his previously political companions. Another lesson is when Zoubeir takes him to an abandoned prison. As Mokhtar wanders in the dark, abandoned chamber, Zoubeir performs the role of a theatrical actor. He delivers a monologue, saying, "No, no, I could not afford . . . They poured cold water on my head. What did they want? What did I do to them? God help me."[31] This psychological session does succeed in opening the old man's mind and in regaining his memory.

In a brilliant scene, the camera displays Mokhtar walking to the corner in which he was tortured. In a flashback, the camera depicts his remembrance of the moment in which he was dragged down the stair of the prison by the two soldiers. It shows him also reliving the scenes of his own torture and presents them to us as if they were occurring now. After that, Zoubeir reminds him that the abandoned prison is actually the one where he was taken the first time, along with other prisoners among them Zoubeir's father, Omar al-Ahmadi. Finally, memory is retrieved and the buried past is relived through Mokhtar's recovery of his memory, which symbolizes the regain of the repressed history. As Edward Said writes, "in the case of a political identity that's being threatened, culture is a way of fighting against extinction and obliteration. Culture is a form of memory against effacement."[32]

The most important way in recovering the historical archive of the 'Lead Years' is exemplified by Mokhtar's recurrent recalling of what happened to him and his display of such sufferings as if they were passing now. In his attempts to recall the past, the protagonist seems anxious of not being able to narrate the past events and then lose his control and power over the present. This is clearly depicted in one scene, at the end of the film, when the camera displays him crying and asking "why my father?"[33] Then the camera displays him recalling the names of his companions one by one to assert that they will be kept in his memory as long as he lives. In so doing, the film affirms that he still has the power to narrate and his voice and story can never be obliterated. The scene implies the capability of memory to overcome the attempts of oblivion through depicting Zoubeir's burning desire to figure out the past and Mokhtar's success of recovering his memory.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Edward Said and David Barsamian, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 159.

[33] Ferhati, dir., *Dhakirah Mou'taqalah* (Memory in Detention).

In addition, the desire to bring back the imprisoned memory, which signifies the possibilities of producing counter-narratives, is clearly depicted through Zahra's long search for her lover and his buried past. The camera spectacles her while she is striving at pain to discover what happened for her lover. She goes forth and back, asking the Amnesty International, the prison official authorities and the families of the political detainees about him. After the long journey of search, Zahra comes, at the end of the film, to an old official and asks him about Mokhtar. The official narrates to her the story of his imprisonment. He tells her that Mokhtar's father came to him and revealed the names of Mokhtar's former political companions in an attempt to free him. By crafting this story, the director tries to show us how those political activists are now properly remembered in the present. To enhance this idea, the camera moves to Mokhtar while he is writing the names of the former political activists on the floor. Zoubeir comes and reads them loudly, namely "Omar al-Ahmedi and Ali Ben al-Hashimi." Mokhtar adds another companion by the name of "al-Arabi"[34] and then start blaming his father for revealing their names to the authorities. Here, memory is used as a powerful tool to resist forced disappearance of both individuals and their stories.

Such ending of the film shows that memory is restored through a journey backwards. The buried past of Zoubeir's father is uncovered in the present and the gap in the protagonist's memory is filled through his capacity to bring back the forgotten, marginalized and suppressed history. Largely speaking, the ending of the film signifies that whatever the dominant power has done to repress the history of the dissent voices, it returns back since there is always a voice of resistance capable to expose the oppressive practices and replace them with counter-dominating alternatives. These alternative discourses seek to pave the way for the culture of recognition through attempts to turn down the flagrant abuse of human rights.

The culture of recognition is constructed in the film in two ways. On the one hand, it is articulated in the film through breaking the cultural taboo by tackling subjects which were difficult, if impossible, to be dealt with in Moroccan past. In other words, the subjugated knowledge has erupted across the field once controlled, to use Edward Said's words. On the other hand, it is established through wresting back the elitist monopoly of cultural productions and celebrating the histories of the subaltern groups. These minority groups have been essential constituents of Moroccan history. Therefore, to neglect their stories is to ignore

[34] Ibid.

some aspects of Moroccan culture. That is, the film brings into the surface the history that has been unrecorded in the annuals of the official Moroccan history. It talks about the past as it has been excluded, repressed and not acknowledged.

Therefore, the film brings back the repressed past and its unacknowledged sufferings in order to change the present. The Moroccan critic, Abdellatif Bazi states that "discovering the pitfalls and limitations of the past performs a possible entry to confront the challenges of the present."[35]Apparently, political imprisonment, nowadays, can be symbolically represented through censorship over journalism that can lead to the imprisonment of the intellectual's thought. So, the film is not to be simply understood as a representation of a particular era, the Lead Years. Rather it is a call for a culture of recognition which is metaphorically represented through negotiating and challenging the power-structure. In her analysis of the film, Orlando contends:

> Like many of his contemporaries, the filmmaker seeks to challenge audiences to think in a universal terms about the human condition. His central message is a warning that in any society, at any time, atrocities, kidnappings, and torture could occur. [36]

Here, Orlando sees that the filmic art cannot be simply framed within a specific era or a local context since its message and the sympathy it elicits seem to lean towards the universal. Ferhati's message, for her, is a warning of human right violations that may occur in any hegemonic society. So, to turn down the pages of the repressed past, the director sees that we shall take into consideration the stories of the oppressed in order to recompense them for their sufferings and to stop such sufferings from being repeated again. In other words, the film focuses not only on the forgotten past but also on the impact that the remembrance of such past should have in changing the present. This, in turn, helps bridge the gap between the individual and the official memories as it is metaphorically represented, in the film, by filling the gap in Mokhtar's memory.

The film is grounded on the struggle over memory in an indication of its important role in the reconstruction of an encompassing identity. It is on this account that the individual can sense of his national belonging where he could enjoy a relatively equal citizenship. Memory

[35] Abdellatif Bazi, "Nahw Sinima Muwatana: Iqtirab min Filmay 'Dhakira Muʿtaqala wa-l-Nazra'" (Towards a Cinema of Citizenship: Approaching the films "Memory in Detention" and the "Look"). In (*Wachma Magazine*, Tetouan, N. 1/2005), p. 43.

[36] Orlando, *Screening Morocco*, p. 114.

is approached as an instrument to rectify the wrongs of the past in order to prevent or, at least, reduce its consequence on the present and future. That is, as memory inhabits the body, the past inhabits the present. The restoration of the memory of displacement and political imprisonment paves the space for alternative accounts that run counter to the official documentation of Moroccan history. Incompatible with the official narratives that represent political activists as a subversive threat to the national security, the director, employing metaphors, personifications and other symbols, represents them as peaceful and innocent as child, flower, pigeon, and blue sky. In so doing, he sees their activities as well as their dreams as legitimate and indispensable rights. Thus, bringing back the repressed memory poses a challenge to the official memory, which almost distorts or neglects the stories of the oppressed or, at the best, relegates them to secondary consideration when they are mentioned. It is worth mentioning that memory is represented to be restored through a long journey of research embarked by the first and second generation and by both male and female. In this vein, the film questions not only the official memory that focuses on a certain elitist groups at the expense of excluding others, but also the counter-memory that privileges the accounts of the first generation over the second and man over woman or vice versa. It is on this basis that the film is seen to promote the cultural recognition.

The Moroccan films under analysis seem to be framed within rectification of the colonial and national historiographies, which are depicted to be made of gendered perspectives. All of them link resistance with the quest for freedom, liberation and justice. But, the resistance raised in the films *Thirst* and *Memory in Detention* avoids the pitfall of demonizing the Other. These two film focus on the idea of oppression and the alternative way to address it rather than on the individual characters. By contrast, the third Moroccan film under analysis, *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal, 2008) by Hamid Zoughi, launches a sever diatribe against one of the most despotic leaders, caid Aissa Ben Omar. The following section is devoted to the analysis of resistance that is iconized by a marginalized woman referred to as shikha Hadda or Kharboucha in the historical context of the nineteenth century Morocco. It tries to explore the mechanisms of despotism and the dialectics of resistance by which Kharboucha undermines the influence of the dominating power that keeps suppressing her tribe. Guided by Said's notion of writing back and subaltern theorists' attempt to rethink elitist historiography, my analysis attempt to show how this film helps rethink the stereotypical image about shikhat in the colonial as well as mainstream Moroccan culture.

2.3. Counter-Stereotypical Discourse: Revoicing Moroccan Shikhat in Zoughi's *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal, 2008)

Hamid Zoughi is a Moroccan actor and filmmaker. He is recognized by his contribution to the revival of *'aita* art as a form of Moroccan popular artistic heritage. [37] This kind of art has an expressive power that might not be available in other forms of art as it is manifest in the film under analysis *Kharboucha*. It seems to have two intertwined functions: It helps "resurrect the heritage music that has long been overshadowed by titans like Umm Kulthum, Abdel Halim Hafez and Fayrouz," [38] and it helps mobilize people in defense of their country, tribe or cause whatever the consequences might be. It is sometimes structured to inflame the feelings of love. The film director adapts such kind of art to the screen in order to address social and political problems and provide a counter-stereotypical discourse of Moroccan shikhat.

Zoughi's film *Kharboucha* recounts the political role of a female popular singer called shikha Hadda/kharboucha in resistance movement against one of the most controversial Moroccan leaders, caid Aissa Ben Omar, who had a conflict with the Oulad Zayd's tribe in the late nineteenth century Morocco. Ben Omar has succeeded in suppressing the insurrection led by Hadda's tribe named Oulad Zayd, due to the heavy taxes imposed on them by his ruling authority. He has invaded her tribe and killed a lot of them, among them her father. But, the survival of kharboucha remains a thorn in his throat. As a pivotal female figure in the musical and poetic tradition, Hadda makes use of her bewitching voice to mobilize the masses against his authority and to avenge for her tribe. Her inflammatory songs are represented as mightier than the sword in the sense that they undermine his political and

[37] As cited by Deporah Kapchan, Mohamed Kharraz defines *'Aita* not only as a popular song that has been "sung at harvests and weddings," but also as a song that "had and continues to have a socio-political function in the Moroccan historical imagination." Debora A. Kapchan, *Gender on the Market: Mooroccan women and the Revoicing of Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 188.

[38] Mariam Qamar, "Cross Dressers Seeking to Revive Morocco's Aita Folk Music," *Raseef* 22, Wednesday 14 March 2018, <https://raseef22.net/article/1071578-cross-dressers-seeking-revive-moroccos-aita-folk-music>.

Note: the *Aita* art in Morocco seems quite similar to what is called "Zamil" or "Sheilah" in Yemen and the Gulf respectively. The current war between the Saudi-led Coalition and Yemen has led to the revival and even prosperity of this kind of art in the Yemeni context. This kind of art, which consists of structured poems using almost the form of colloquial dialects, has played a significant role in mobilizing the Yemeni tribes and masses in defense of their country.

religious authority. She despises him for the brutal way he treats her tribe, calling him "an eater of carrion, killer of uncles."[39] Put it another way, she attempts, in her lyrics, to incite people and urge them to fight against him. In response, the local warlord Ben Omar has tried his best, using both coercion and consent, to silence her detrimental voice, but without avail. After realizing that all his attempts to stop the flow of her songs would be fruitless, he ordered his entourage to bury her alive. But, this act proves to be the straw that breaks his back. The ballads she sings have breathed the spirit of rebellion; Ben Omar's entourage end loudly repeating her songs against him and his downfall came at the moment she is paying her life for fighting his oppressive authority. This means that her death has fired out the flame of revolution instead of subduing it.

The film opens with an establishing long shot, describing the setting where the events of the film take place. It then carries over into love-story between shikha Hadda and a male singer named Doukkali. But, as the scene moves, the film shows the audience that their love is platonic and pure since it is based on moral and religious codes. This unfolds from the first dialogue that runs between them.

> DOUKKALI. This will be unforgettable night.
>
> SHIKHA HADDA. Yeah! Spend this night with me and tomorrow with another woman?
>
> DOUKKALI. Can I do this? My eyes can never look at other women.
>
> SHIKHA HADDA. Liar! If you are invited by one of the caid's daughters, can you say no?
>
> DOUKKALI. All girls of Oulad Zayd's tribe know that I am going to marry you. So, no one can think of me.
>
> SHIKHA HADDA. If you want them to blind their eyes to us, let's make a legal marriage contract.
>
> DOUKKALI. I'll go tomorrow to your father. We'll marry in the summer.
>
> SHIKHA HADDA. This is a pledge of our love (she offers him her necklace). If you lose it, you lose me.[40]

[39] Hamid Zoughi, dir. *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal), Morocco: The Centre of Moroccan Cinematography, 2008.

[40] Ibid.

In this dialogue, the film director totally disproves the dominant stereotypes that describe shikhat as playful and easy-going women who may have several sexual partners. In the dominant beliefs, "the shikha," as Deborah Kapchan states in her book *Gender on the Market,* "is categorized as "loose": her freedom of physical expression in dance is tied to an assumed licentiousness in the moral realm."[41] Kapchan goes on to say: "In fact, women without moral scruples may be compared to shikhat who are lost in the suq."[42] Against such dominant degrading background, the film tries to demonstrate that women's performance cannot be necessarily associated with the scandalous openness of their bodies; the female performer in the above dialogue neither accepts to have more than one partner nor to have a cohabitation outside marriage. In so doing, the essentialist association of Moroccan shikhat with the marketplace is profoundly challenged because shikha Hadda proves to have righteousness and chastity in every respect. When she has become sure that Doukkali has honest feelings towards her, she demands him to go to her father and make a marriage contract. Upon his agreement to do so, she concludes the dialogue by offering him her necklace as a pledge for the fulfillment of their promise.

The story of the film moves to depict the struggle between the leader, Ben Omar, who is represented as a symbol of despotism and tyranny, and the revolutionary woman shikha Hadda/Kharboucha. Her resistance to his despotic authority is framed within the tribal insurrection, taking place in the ninetenth century Morocco. To highlight Ben Omar's authoritative power, the director presents the first words he utters to his audience while he is talking in a threatening tone, saying, "I swear I will punish them all."[43] That is, her courage and rebellious act can make more sense when it is compared to his entourage's fear and compliance.

The film compares Ben Omer's potential to impose his control over tribes to his helplessness to subdue a revolutionary female voice. The camera shows people to be so subservient to his authority that no one could dare to resist or even protest him. He subjects them to different types of oppressions such as high taxes, incarceration, exploitation, and bondage. Later, he invades Hadda's tribe and kills all her relatives. Shikha Hadda is taken as a captive. Using the politics of seduction, the leader's son Moulay Ahmed attempts to gain her consent and approval. He fabricates a story by claiming that he has an enmity with his father and he is going to get rid of him in order to take his place. He tells her: "I will prepare

[41] Kapchan, *Gender on the Market*, p. 185.
[42] Ibid., p. 181.
[43] Zoughi, dir. *Kharboucha*.

the plan of execution this evening."[44] Here, the filmmaker shows that she is a person of not only poetic and rebellious capacity, but also of discernment. Therefore, he could not fool her neither by his seduction nor by his trick.

This female subject appears to be conscious not only of the tropes of her oppression and exploitation as Guha argues, but also of the devices of trickery and the suitable ways to reverse them. She responds to his deceptive statement in ironical tone, saying "are you kidding with me?"[45] Her rhetorical question can be interpreted in two ways. First, it signifies that she is aware of his tricks and can never be easily duped. Second, it is understood as a refutation of the idea of flexibility attributed to shikhat. That is, she can neither break her pledge with her fiancé Doukkali nor betray the blood of her clan, because she is depicted throughout the film as a woman of principles.

What distinguishes the dialogue that runs between them is the vulnerability and weakness of Moulay Ahmed in front of her since he promises her to do whatever she wants. Figure (12) shows the powerful status of shikha Hadda and the disempowered position of Moulay Ahmed in the sense that his status is socially and politically reduced and lowered to the status of the Moroccan shikhat. More than that, the picture shows him as if he is willingly ready to be under her command. This destabilizes the dominant discourses that describe shikhat as flexible and vulnerable women who can be easily swept by material interests. Here, the filmmaker deconstructs the dominant representation of Moroccan shikhat as objects for the male gaze because the camera displays Hadda as the bearer of the look. In so doing, the film criticizes the way women performer's identity is formed and perceived by society.

Figure 12. Encounter between shikha Hadda and Moulay Ahmed signifying her vigilance in confronting all his tricks (Zoughi, *Kharboucha,* 2008).

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

Her power is measured through her capability to penetrate his psyche and infer what runs in his mind. Thus, she turns him from the state of exploiter into the state of being exploited. Instead of being the controller of the position, he becomes controlled, simply because he stands disable to understand her interlocutor's intentions. Thus, he begins seeking her to sing for the audience. Cleverly enough, she accepts the idea, but she makes use the situation to dismantle his father's authority and expose his evil reality to audiences. In this regard, the film director projects her as a powerful icon and a leading agent of change.

It is noteworthy to mention that she transforms her songs into a discourse of resistance. That is, the marginal status of songs and its association with an entertainment are revisited in the film by giving these songs a political dimension. When she is summoned to perform by the governor's son, she delivers a revolutionary song, criticizing the governor and uncovering his faults in front of the public so that other tribes would be aware of his repressive practices and would therefore rebel against him. The verses she sings are very detrimental to his religious, social and political authority as they are clarified below:

> Oh, miserable days! . . .
> Days of oppression and darkness.
> Where are you, the little Aissa?
> Where is your honor and grandeur?
>
> *wa-khayti lik el-ayyam! . . .*
> *ayyam el-qahra w-l-zalam.*
> *finak ya 'Aiwaysah?*
> *fayn el-shan w-l-mirshan?*[46]

In this stanza, Hadda does not want to please her audience or to create emotional tenor of celebration, but to bring to the fore the historical wounds that Ben Omar has inflicted on her clan. At first, the audience is seen solely attracted by her body and musical performance. In the opening line, the camera displays the governor's son enjoyably smoking and the audience pleasurably clapping their hands and smiling as shown in figure 13. But, upon focusing on the song's words and hearing exactly the phrase of "little Aissa," her song appears to them like a fearful thunder. It turns the governor's glory into shame; hence, the audience's entertaining

[46] Ibid.

expectation and pleasurable excitement turn into frustration and shock as it is clearly seen in their facial expressions. (See figure 14) Her use of the small formulation of his name "little Aissa" cannot be said to be arbitrary. It seems that she consciously uses the phrase in order to reduce his social and political status and then destabilizes his authority. Thus, her satire raises the following questions: first, can honor and grandeur be measured by exercising oppression? And does oppression have the potential to silence the voices of the oppressed? Second, who nominates who to classify people in a vertical line in which shikhat is put in the margin? And on what criteria are such generalization to be based? The film tries to reshuffle the oppressive relations as well as subvert the stereotypical image of shikhat as a symptom of sexuality, because it is her words rather than her bodily movements that make the most permanent effect both in the moment and in the memory.

Figure 13. Moulay Ahmed and his entourage celebrate Hadda's song (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

Figure 14. Hadda's diatribe shocks Moulay Ahmed and the audience (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

In figure 13 and 14, the filmmaker shows shikha Hadda's capacity to transform the space constructed in colonial and official discourses as a space of fantasy and pleasure into a space of insurgency and liberation. She directs harsh satire against the governor for turning their happy and pretty days into mourning and miserable ones. Moreover, the song depicts his epoch as a symbol of darkness and oppression where he destroys their freedom and frustrates their dream. Her words seem as powerful as ammunitions and gunfire in the sense that they freeze the audience's movements and turn them helpless. The image on the left shows them applauding for her song because they expect it to be entertaining. But, her sharp and biting

words make them so astonished that they become unable to react, as shown in the image on the right. By her revolutionary song, she reverses the essentialist image about shikhat.

In this regard, Mohamed Kharraz notes that "whatever relation this legend bears to history, it attests to the role ascribed to shikhat song in a political conflict; l-'aita was not just sung at harvests and weddings but had and continues to have a socio-political function in the Moroccan historical imagination."[47] Here, shikha employs the attention centered on her to detail the crimes and sufferings the authoritarian figure, Ben Omar, has inflicted on people. She continues remembering, with a mournful voice, the loss of people she identifies with as she states:

> How many humans have you oppressed?
> How many gentlemen have you slaughtered
> with neither reason nor remorse?
> You burned the crops and robbed the cattle.
> You dragged women like beasts.
> And you made countless orphans.
>
> *ish-hal ghayyarti min 'ibad?*
> *ish-hal saffayti min siyad*
> *bila shafqa bila tikhmam?*
> *haraqti el-ghalla w-sbiti el-ksiba.*
> *w-suqti el-nisa kif el-'an'am.*
> *w-yattamti el-sibyan bi-l-arram*[48]

The film director brings this powerful subversive song into view to de-stereotype the social construction of shikhat as "the epitome of all that is low and base in society."[49]Shikha is represented, here, as a carrier of the social and political transformation and as a symbol of courage and resistance. She dares reminding people of all his oppressive and despotic practices in order to arm them with social consciousness of his hegemonic practices and, then, with a rebellious spirit that would enable them to undermine his authority both textually and militarily. The textual influence of her songs is exemplified, in the film, by making

[47] Quoted in Kapchan, *Gender on the Market*, p. 188.
[48] Zoughi, dir. *Kharboucha*.
[49] Kapchan, *Gender on the Market*, p. 202.

people recurrently recite them. And the military influence is represented in mobilizing her tribe's armed attack on the governor and his entourage as it is vivid in the final scene of the film.

Kharboucha's verses totally dismantle the construction of shikhat as "uprooted personages with no claims to identifying geography,"[50] because her songs depict a part of the trauma the governor has caused to her tribe and relatives. The deeper she goes in her critical investigation of his history, the more contemptible and criminal it looks. Thus, she goes on to wage the war, fought by her poetic diatribes, against him for his oppressive attack on her clan.

You trespass and break hearts
And think of your job as permanent.
You have discarded the men of honor
And pushed the shappy people to the front.
May Allah take you, Aissa Ben Omar!
Aissa, the eater of carrion.
Aissa, the killer of his brothers and the authorizer of the forbidden.

t'addayti wa-khassarti el-khawatir
wa-zannayti el-qiyada l-l-dawam.
fi ayyamak el-jid ma baqa-lu shan
wa-l-ra'wani zayyadtih el-quddam.
syr 'Aissa bin 'Mar
'a-wakkal al-jyfa
w-ya qattal khutu w-mhallil el-haram.[51]

The first impression of her lyric is that she describes him as the eater of corpse, which no one dares drawing near it because of its disgusting smell, in a metaphor for his looting of his citizens' properties. In other words, he is depicted to be polluted with bloodshed and pillage. She, however, advocates the audience to be optimistic since his authority would not be eternal. Then she mocks at his cognitive capacities by exposing to them how he has foolishly discarded the honorable men and drawn to him the "shabby people." She concludes her lyrics

[50] Ibid., 203.
[51] Zoughi, dir. *Kharboucha.*

by dismantling what remains of his religious authority by calling him "the eater of carrion," "the killer of his brother" and "the authorizer of the forbidden." The camera highlights the power of her song on the psychological condition of the governor's son as well as on the audience; they are shown to be fixed in their places except one Jew. This Jew is seen creeping slowly to reveal to the governor the rebellious diatribe shikha Hadda launched on him.

Upon hearing the news, the governor orders his soldiers to drag her to him. He also summons his entourage to reproach them for keeping silent on her lyrical attack on his social position. Incomparable to her, they are represented as so submissive that they do not dare neither to talk nor even to raise their eyes towards him. On the contrary, shikha revolts against the policy of oppression and conformity. When she is brought to him, he asks her to answer: "what am I the eater of?"[52] She courageously replays: "you are the eater of carrion."[53]In a close-up shot, the camera focuses on her facial expression while she is pronouncing the word "carrion" with disgust and loathe (see figure 15). Shikha, here, represents the voice of resistance enacted by those commonly regarded as powerless. Her resistance is detected not only in the words she compose, but also in the way she delivers them, as it appears in her gaze, tone and gesture. This implies that the position of oppressive authority is so vulnerable that it can be shaken by a single individual's voice. Hence, this opens the possibilities for challenging and even changing the politics of domination.

Figure 15. Shikha Hadda detests and scorns caid Aissa Ben Omar (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

In her dealing with the peasant insurgents, Ranajit Guha argues that they are not mobilized by another consciousness and they are self-aware of their resistant acts. Here, Kharboucha is seen as not only conscious of the tropes of oppression and the ways to address them, but also able to spread social awareness among the masses and incite them to react against the power that oppresses them. Her imprisonment does not silence her resistance's voice because her poetic diatribe against the leader becomes the common voice of the people. To highlight the potential of the minority people in leading social change, the camera cuts to display her lover, Doukkali, as he is preaching in his tribe and mobilizing them to avenge from Aissa Ben Omar and his entourage. The filmmaker selects her lover to be a preacher in order to signify that those marginalized and stereotyped people can be essential elements of change and transformation in any society.

Shikha Hadda's shackle is undone by one of the leader's female servants after she has narcotized the guard. She is then released from the prison, and they both flee to the governor of Safi, caid Miloudi Ben Mbarek El Ayadi. Having known the power of her words and the circulation of her discursive song, the governor, Ben Omar, orders his soldiers to bring her back dead or alive. After he has known that she fled to the governor of Safi, he sends him a letter, threatening him to submit her lest he regrets his risking act. El Ayadi appreciates her rebellious spirit and her quest for justice, addressing her: "You are a woman and you are better, for me, than a hundred men."[54] But, he apologizes to her because he does not want to engage in trouble with Ben Omar. Therefore, she decides to go to the governor of Marrakesh. On her way, her companions betray her and she is arrested and brought back to the governor Ben Omar. The film director weaves this complicated story to highlight the significant social position and the political functions of shikha Hadda in the process of social transformations in Moroccan society through not only signaling her contribution but also her leading role in resisting the authoritarian oppression.

When she is summoned by the caid, he surprisingly asks her of what she smells because her eyes are covered. She repulsively answers: "I sniff the smell of carrion."[55]Then she spits on the ground. The governor excuses her and tries his best to gain her consent in hope to suspend her destructive songs. He has used different ways in order to control her and confine her lyrical attack against him such as threat, arrest, imprisonment, torture, and later propitiation. All the strategies used to mute her rebellious voice fail since she, as she states,

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

"could not forget what he has done to her tribes and relatives."[56] Here, the film presents to the audience her cling to the values and the principles she resists for. This deconstructs the representation of shikhat as uprooted, flexible or easy-going women.

The director seems interested in breaking down the binary opposition and turning down class division between Moroccan shikhat and the official elites. In this regard, the film shows the potential of shikha Hadda to lower the social position of the governor and to even have a control upon him. The camera presents him undoing her shackles in a servile way. (See figure 16) It also displays him submitting to her the water and food so as to seek her consent. (See figure 17)

Figure 16. Caid Aisa Ben Omar undoes shikha Hadda's shackle (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

Figure 17. Caid Aisa Ben Omar submits water and food to shikha Hadda (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

In these two images, the director represents the potential of shikha Hadda to decenter the center and to reverse the hierarchical structure of Moroccan society. Here, she relegates the symbol of dominant authority, caid Ben Omar, to perform a servitude to her. The symbol of domination and hegemony, who is seen turning the other people to employees and servants, is now rendered to submit water and food to woman performer, Hadda. Instead of her attempts to gain his pleasure and consent, he is vulnerably seen trying his best to please her. In so doing, the director tries to break down the idea of measuring power on class and gender basis.

In spite of the caid's attempts, overtures and even servitudes to render her submissive, Hadda keeps stuck to the idea of resistance as it is shown in this dialogue:

[56] Ibid.

CAID BEN OMAR. Do you admire this situation?

SHIKHA HADDA. What have you offered me can never retreat me to avenge for my father and my tribal men.[57]

Here, the film director clarifies that shikha Hadda does not fight for commercial gains or for a piece of land since she rejects all his offers. She fights for the principles of freedom, emancipation and equality. After the caid becomes sure that he cannot subject her by materialistic seduction, he refers to the rhetoric of advising and blaming. But, she refuses to stop her lyrical attack unless he becomes the ash of the fire that she turns on. This unfolds in the following dialogue:

CAID BEN OMAR. Every one commits an error. But, I'm ready to rectify it. I'm ready to offer you Abda, Doukkala and Chaouia if you want. Just stop your bitter songs on me.

SHIKHA HADDA. Even if you gave me the whole world, it would not relieve my pain. I could not feel happy till I shed your blood.

CAID BEN OMAR. Cannot you speak language other than music? And cannot you speak like everyone?

SHIKHA HADDA. Aita is my rifle. And its rhyme is powder and bullets. If you kill me and become no longer of this world, it will survive.

CAID BEN OMAR. Why don't you turn off the fire?

SHIKHA HADDA. It is you who has turned it on and it will never stop till you become its ash.[58]

This dialogue gives an impression that Hadda cannot even pause for a breath to continue her musical diatribes against him; she appears to have determined to go on in her resistance till his oppressive authority is destabilized. In this regard, there is similarity between her resistance and the resistance raised in the above-discussed films, *'Atach* (Thirst) and *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention), in the sense that the marginalized protagonists in all these three films discursively struggle for creating a world of mutual recognition. That is, the film depicts the ideology of oppression to be costly and even helpless to render the

[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

subalternized people speechless or submissive, and thus puts the culture of mutual recognition as the best alternative.

After he becomes sure that the avenues he has pursued to control her are of no avail, he finally tries to marry her since marriage is seen as a weapon that men usually use, in the tribal society, to subject women and control them. At first, she totally refuses to accept him as a partner as she symbolically compares him to the "carrion". But, she later agrees on the marriage in order either to get rid of him or to destabilize his authority from within the system of power. Getting rid of him has a symbolic rather than literal meaning. It signifies the ability of shikha to undermine the dominant hegemonic practices and subvert the stereotypical representations of women's performance.

The director undermines the social stigmatization and association of shikhat with commodification of sexuality. In the negotiating scene of marriage, shikha Hadda is seen totally rejecting to marry Ben Omar without a legal contract. In such period, the marriage of upper-class male from a woman of a lower rank would bring shame not only to himself but also to his family and tribe. Moreover, to reinforce her political importance, the film presents the governor while he is addressing her as a princess, saying: "You are the bride of princesses."[59] In this regard, the director tries to show the potential of Moroccan shikhat to resist and even twist the hierarchal classification. In other words, he tries to transform the consciousness of Moroccan people beyond gender and class consciousness.

The film ends with the marriage festival. In this festival, shikha Hadda, the religious and the tribal poet, is summoned to sing. In the beginning of her lyric, she starts comparing women to horses. As Kapchan argues, "The comparison of women and horses has special significance. Horses are animals of prestige in Morocco, and their owners take great pride in them."[60] This means that the first stanza performs little challenge to the dominant representation of women as subservient to men. But, as the stanza moves forward, she suddenly reverses her entertaining performance into detrimental diatribe against the governor Ben Omar.

To confirm the power of remembering in the process of recovering the repressed history and in the process of resistance as a whole, the camera displays shikha Hadda while she is recalling Ben Omar's assault on her tribe, his killing of her own father, and the suffering inflicted on her by this despot as if they were passing now. She also remembers her pledge with her lover, Doukkali. Such remembrance persuades her to launch a severe

[59] Ibid.
[60] Kapchan, *Gender on the Market*, p. 206.

criticism to caid Aissa so that "other tribes would be aware of his wrongs and would rebel against him."[61]

In spite of being the same verses she sang when she was summoned by his son Moulay Ahmed, as it is illustrated above, the detrimental effects of these verses on the caid's psychological, social and political position, this time, seem incomparable. At first, the camera displays him in a semi-conscious state as if he were under the effect of drug. Then the camera shows him inflicted with a tragic eruption to the extent that the spectators might think that he would lose his order. At last, he drags her and orders his servants to bury her alive. In a very significant and climax ending, the camera displays her smiling from within the wall as she sees the governor's entourage, tribe and servants rebelling against him and reciting her politically subversive lyric. (See figure 18 and 19 respectively).

Figure 18. Hadda smiles at the moment she is buried alive (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

Figure 19. Caid Aissa Ben Omar's entourage repeats Hadda's song (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

Figure 20. Caid Aissa Ben Omar Weeps (Zoughi, *Kharboucha*, 2008).

In Figure 18, Zoughi's camera presents the triumphant shikha smiling from within the wall because she succeeds in shaking and unsettling the governor's authority. Her rebellious song circulates to the vein of the governor's entourage and servants and powerfully clothes them with a revolutionary spirit. So, unlike Spivak who argues that the subaltern sexed subject cannot speak because of being doubly oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy, the Moroccan shikha, here, does speak and turns the governor's submissive entourage into rebellious and revolutionary figures as shown in figure 19. The leading marginalized female subject is seen having the power and potential to transform the space of submissiveness into a site of

[61]Ibid.

insurgency. This reveals the vulnerability and fragility of the dominant ideology and opens the possibilities of change, as it is obviously seen in figure 20. In this figure, the governor appears to have nothing to do but to weep for his anger.

In this context, the film writes back to colonial and indigenous stigmatizations of the Moroccan shikhat by representing their performance in non-essentialist frame. By doing so, the film evokes the idea of diversity, and thus prevents any essentialist stereotyping along the lines of class and gender. This means that they can use their performance in the opposite direction, to destabilize hierarchy and oppression. Thus, "a cultural symbol of shamelessness" is transformed not only into "a symbol of national diversity,"[62]but also into an emblem of subversive power to domination and aggression. The filmmaker lays bare the dominant stereotypes by proving that shikhat cannot necessarily be epitomes of shame. Rather, they can be significantly bearers of the socio-political changes. He depicts them both linguistically and politically as subversive icons in protesting the superficial ways of thinking about women's performers as well as the dominant hierarchal ideology in Moroccan society.

All what has been said proves that the discourse of resistance adopted in the films under study has the potential to communicate the politics of recognition and reconciliation as the best and fairest alternatives. The logics of colonial expansion and exploitation, the language of torture and secret prisons pursued by national elites and the ideologies of despotism and hierarchy appear to be a short way to defeat[63] or, at least, disempowerment. Just as the colonial system has failed to inhibit the natives' resistance or obliterate their memory, the national ruling system has failed to muffle the voices of political dissidents or repress their memory. This create not only possibilities but also overriding necessities, particularly to those in power, to transcend the limited thinking of Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, essentialism and hierarchy in its various garbs to that of social and human justice, because power struggle is proved to be complex, relational, transformational and even costly to all those involved.

[62] Ibid., p. 209.

[63] The term "defeat," like that of power, is relational rather than dichotomous in the sense that people can triumph in one axis (say in the military sense) but not in another (say in the moral, ethical, and humanitarian sense).

Conclusion

The films analyzed in this chapter have answered back to the colonial and mainstream national historiographies by bringing to the surface the historical memories of Moroccan anti-colonial resistance, political imprisonment and women's struggle against political despotism. Unlike the Eurocentric epistemology that have spoken for the French colonizer as a bearer of the so-called civilizing mission, Chraibi's film *Thirst* exposes the drought, starvation, and incarceration French colonialism has brought to Morocco. This film also refutes the colonial representation of the Moroccan natives as shadowy minor figures and of their space as an exotic setting for the pleasure of Europeans, as it is the case in the American film *Casablanca* (1942) by Michael Curtiz. On the contrary, Chraibi's *Thirst* depicts the occupied territory as space of revolt and rebellion whose indigenous people are never seen exotic, but dignified figures who are thirsty for independence as much as they are thirsty for water. The film captures the excessive thirst of land, animals and populations for water, which is looted, among other resources, by the French colonizer, so as to legitimize the natives' violent resistance; it is envisioned as a necessary and inevitable option to the colonial exploitation. The film, however, portrays the anti-colonial resistance not merely as a battle between two blocs, nationalists and colonialists, but rather as more plural and diverse than the mainstream narratives try to represent. Comparing the resistance articulated in this film to that of Chahine's film *Alexandria . . . New York* suggests that they work in a quite similar manner in the sense that both of them can be situated within the discourse of decolonization. The latter shows the American space that has been so far represented in Western movies and TVs as a symbol of openness, inclusion and democracy in an alternative way as a space of racism, exclusion and imperialism.

The film *Memory in Detention* by Ferhati emphasizes the necessity to develop national consciousness into social and human consciousness so as to avoid regression and socio-political disintegration. The issue of social and human consciousness is even stressed in all the films under study, particularly the Moroccan film *Thirst* and the Egyptian film *Chaos*. Chraibi's film makes it clear that men and women are partners on both interpersonal and societal levels. The recovery of the repressed and buried history is made efficacious by man and woman as well as by the first and second generations. The director seems to say that we have to incorporate gendered and aged perspectives to understand the process of social reforms. This film and even the previous one are full of symbolic images because they are

written in a poetic style. For example, the director compares the voices of the political activists to flowers, doves and blue sky so as to legitimize their activism and "rectify the elitist biases characteristic of much research and academic works"[64] about them. Another symbolic image the director employs is, for instance, Mokhtar's recurrent bloody nose, which flows whenever he sees scenes of violence. The symbolism of the constant remembrance of the past torture lies not only in protesting torture and political imprisonment or in the call for compensation, but also in the creation of alternative accounts that run counter to the official documentation of Moroccan history.

Zughi's film *Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal* provides a counter-stereotypical discourse of Moroccan shikhat and represents them as major icons of social change. The dominant stereotypes dictating that "women without moral scruples may be compared to shikhat who are lost in the suq,"[65]are profoundly undermined. The film proves that women's musical performance can by no means be associated with the scandalous openness of their bodies. Rather, their performance can be perceived as a powerful means of resistance. For example, caid Aissa Ben Omar is seen able to impose his authority over various tribes. However, he stands so vulnerable in front of shikha Hadda that he could not silence her voice or control the circulation of her diatribe songs, neither by consent nor by coercion. Her rebellious song circulates to the veins of the governor's entourage and servants and powerfully clothes them with a revolutionary spirit. Compatible with Edward Said's argument of the power of the word, the verses she sings appear to be very detrimental to his religious, social, political and even cognitive authority. In so doing, the film not only criticizes the way female performer's identity is formed and perceived by a society, but also transforms the space framed in colonial and mainstream discourses as a setting of fantasy, romance and entertainment into a ground of insurgency and liberation. So, unlike Spivak who argues that the subaltern sexed subject cannot speak because of being doubly oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy, the Moroccan shikha, here, does speak and her words has been as powerful as ammunitions, because they turn the governor's submissive entourage into rebellious and revolutionary subjects. In so doing, the film reveals the vulnerability and fragility of the ideologies of oppression and hierarchy and hence paves the way for the culture of recognition and reconciliation.

The discourse of resistance in the Moroccan cinema seems to have much in common with that of the Egyptian cinema. For example, both of them provide cinematic counter-

[64] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 35.
[65] Ibid., p. 181.

telling to the Eurocentric and mainstream historiographies. Although the strategies of resistance adopted in each film differ from one context to another as well as from one director to another, the Moroccan and Egyptian films prove the potential of the subalterns to change or, at least, alleviate the state of their oppression. After tracing the discourse of resistance in the cinematic contexts considered to be more open, the next and last chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the discourse of resistance in the contemporary filmmaking practices of Yemen, a context perceived to be more conservative and adherent to the traditional values.

CHAPTER 3: Resistance in Contemporary Yemeni Films: An Empowerment of the Marginalized in a Conservative and Unstable Context

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we have seen that the forms of resistance articulated in the Egyptian and Moroccan films can be considered as reflex responses to the Eurocentric or ethnocentric, national, class, gender and religious historiographies that operate on the ideology of Othering. Likewise, the discourse of resistance articulated in this chapter goes in line with those previous cinematic discourses in terms of the orientation; that is, all of them try to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses and rewrite them in revisionist ways based on the politics of inclusion and recognition. However, spatiality does matter in dictating the thematic selection for the film director, because, as Edward Said argues in his *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, the text is deeply involved in "circumstance, time, place, and society."[1] On this account, the Yemeni film directors draw heavily on problematizing man-woman relationships—issues which appear to be more relevant to people concerns—so as to create a space for critiques of Eurocentric, class and patriarchal epistemologies.

This chapter brings to the fore a form and content analysis of three Yemeni films, which are recognized as the only features to be produced from Yemen, a country without cinema industry. Like the methodology adopted in the previous chapters, I inaugurate my analysis of the films under study by providing a precise overview of the director to see how his artistic background is reflected in his film under analysis. The first section analyzes the ambivalence of identity in Bader Ben Hirsi's *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a, 2005), in which I try to discuss how Yemeni social interaction can stand as a challenge to the Western and nationally class reductive representations of the Yemeni identity. That is, it analyzes how cultural differences cannot function—as it is in the cases of the Orientalist and nationally hierarchal discourses—as a mental blockade in the face of cross-cultural and cross-class communication. While the first section tries to problematize how human relations and social exchanges defy to be rigidly determined by a set of class, gender or even religious constraints, the second section, which is devoted to the analysis of Khadijah al-Salami's *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and

[1] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 35.

Divorced, 2014), brings to the fore a child bride's pivotal resistance against the institutions of patriarchy. It attempts to describe how patriarchy in its marital, familial, tribal, religious, legal and political forms rests mainly upon the control of female body. However, the film discusses how the dominant attempts to control the female child by driving her into forced union prove to be more challenging than the patriarchs might believe. In contrast to the forced relationship that might be a window to disintegration, the third film Amr Gamal's *'Ashrat Ayyam qabl al-Zaffa* (10 Days before the Wedding, 2018) touches the issue of love relationship in the time of war; that is, it tries to problematize the following questions: How can love constitute a unifying force against the hegemonic politics of disintegration? And on what criteria is such kind of love established?

3.1. Love as a Bridge to "Third Space"[2]: Rethinking Essentialism in Ben Hirsi's *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a, 2005)

Beder Ben Hirsi is a British-Yemeni film director and playwright. Before embarking on his award-winning feature film under analysis, Ben Hirsi has made several dramas and documentaries.[3] His artistic career seems to be rooted in the desire to produce counter-stories to the dichotomous discourses as it appears in his documentary film *The English Sheikh and The Yemeni Gentleman* (2000) and his feature *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005), both of which deal with the ambivalence of identity and its defiance of the essentialist understandings. Like the other film directors under study, Ben Hirsi seems to view arts as a vehicle by which one can contribute to building bridges between different cultures and different social classes. This assumption is going to be tested through a discussion of his current film, which is recognized as the first feature film from Yemen.

A New Day in Old Sana'a narrates the story of an aristocratic young photographer, Tariq, whose family has arranged for him to marry a prominent judge's daughter, Bilqis. Shortly before his wedding, he has caught sight of a beautiful young woman dancing in the street in the white dress he has given as a gift to his fiancée. Ironically, the dancing girl whom he believes to be Bilqis turns out to be a lower-class orphaned artist named Inas. He becomes

[2] Third space is a term used by Homi Bhabha to refer to the in-between space or meeting zone where the seemingly dichotomous categories meet and merge to form hybrid identification by which "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves." See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 38-39. It is used in the film to show how human relationships defy to be bound by fixed borders such as race, religion, class, skinned-color and gender because identity is hybrid and transformational rather than pure and static.

[3] Ginsberg and Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, pp. 58-59.

charmed by Inas' beauty as well as personality. Consequently, he utterly falls in love with her. However, Tariq finds himself in a conflicting situation; he has to choose between his desire to marry the girl he loves, and the social tradition, which drives him to marry the one who fits with his social class. The main story of the cross-class love between Tariq and Inas is discussed in its relation to a sub-story of cross-cultural love between Federico, an Italian photographer, and Bilqis, Tariq's would-be bride. In this way, the film portrays love as fuel for strengthening human bonds and pushing people from identification based on class, gender, religion or nation to that based on human consciousness.

The resistance being waged by the director is not simply over the promotion of old Sana'a as a great historical city, but over the emergence of counter-stereotypic discourses that call into question the Orientalist images of the Arab world, particularly of woman, as well as the nationalist historiographical accounts of the lower classes. Thus, my discussion draws heavily on how the film creates a space for cultural critiques of the binary categorization and essentialist understandings, and how it moves away from various forms of ethnocentrism to multiculturalism. What seems to set this film apart from the previous ones, on the level of form, is its much focus on dialogue on the consideration of being a core in the process of critical identification and reconciliation. To pave the way for the language of dialogue, the film starts by setting the ground for conceptualizing the different Other as a human irrespective of his class, race, gender or religious background.

From the beginning, the idea of resistance seems to be articulated through the strategy of "setting the power of love against the force of tradition."[4] The introductory scene captures a fleeting encounter between Tariq and Inas presented by alternating shots. While Tariq is seen walking to the mosque to perform the dawn prayer, he accidently glimpses Inas, dancing in the street in the dress he has given as a gift to his fiancée, Bilqis. Instead of being shocked by her behavior that breaks the tradition of the Yemeni society, Tariq appears to be mesmerized by her ravishing beauty, and he hence falls passionately in love with her. The scene shows that identity is influenced not merely by class belonging, but importantly by the overflowing feelings of love. As a lower-class girl, Inas shows that what have been socially recognized as upper-class people can by no means have monopoly over power and beauty, because these terms are fluid, multidimensional and more spiritual than materialistic in content.

[4] Roy Armes, *Arab Filmmakers of the Middle East: A Dictionary* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 25.

In the introductory scene, only a small portion is illuminated, using low-key lighting, while the other portion is extremely dimly lit so as to lend an air of suspense and vagueness. Inas's identity is shown to be vague as she is mistaken for Bilqis, and her mysterious identity is only revealed through a journey of investigation and identification. The director gets us to be first acquainted with the personal characteristics of the socially recognized upper class Bilqis and the lower class Inas in order to see how the fixed categorization of people on the ground of their class or gender turns to be unfair and misleading as well, because, as Stuart Hall affirms, "identity is not as transparent and unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact . . . we should think, instead of identity as a "production"."[5]

The setting of the film is left out of focus in the previous scene. Therefore, to set the place and time of the film narrative and to draw the viewers' attention to what would be revealed, the film, at the opening scene, displays an establishing long shot of the old city of Sana'a during the glamorous calls for the Dawn prayer. The scene then dissolves in a smooth and aesthetic manner to show fascinating images of old Sana'a where we see the morning sunlight gleams upon it. The transition to daylight might symbolize the hope of a new day in which the boundaries between the seemingly hierarchical or dichotomous categories would be bridged, as the title of the film suggests. As the camera is panning over the old city of Sana'a during the expansion of the morning light, a travelogue-style voiceover narration is superimposed, prompting viewers to the interest of being open to different situations and cultures. "A trusted friend once tell me to travel South in search of the sun. Only then, you'll unearth the magic about world she revealed. It's like the grass being greener,"[6] the voice-over states. Although the voice-over conjures up the spatial metaphors used frequently by White Europeans to "impose[s] neat divisions, along a double axis (East/West, North/South),"[7] the manner in which the photographic images display the historic heritage of old Sana'a undermines the Western categorization for being both essentialist and imprecise. This is reinforced by the narrator's acknowledgement of the fact that other people's spaces and cultures might appear richer and more attractive than one's own.

The film is narrated by Federico, an Italian photographer who serves as a mediator between the West and East, the North and South. As a foreigner who lives in an Oriental

[5] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed., J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1999), p. 222.

[6] Bader Ben Hirsi (dir.), *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a), Felix Films Entertainment Ltd., 2005.

[7] Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism, p. 13.

space, the ancient city of Sana'a, Federico occupies a liminal space. This would help him question both the Orientalist reductive representation of the Arab world and the Yemeni traditions that are deemed to be oppressive. For him, his task as a cinematic photographer is not a mere recording of the Yemen's picturesque landscape and architectural monuments, but the investigation of the images that have been so far constructed and circulated about the Orient in Western media. In the opening scene, the narrator comments that "what fascinates me the most about this city is not its unique architecture nor its colorful people, but rather the untold secrets and mysteries that lay hidden behind stone walls."[8] His promotion of himself as a discoverer-protagonist of the Oriental space that he depicts as secrete and mysterious and its nature as feminine actually reminds us of the manner in which Eurocentric historiography has dealt with the Arab world. However, reading his comments in relation to the whole story of film gives us a clear understanding that the director employs a European story not simply to get the film accessible to a wider audience, but importantly to communicate an iconoclastic vision to the one that was shaped by colonial travel literature.

In an interview by Larissa Bender, the film director proclaims that some scenes in his feature film under analysis are intended to "contradict[…] the picture which Europeans have of the Arab world."[9] Viewed from this angle, the film is to be understood as a rectification of the Western construction of the Yemeni identity through what the film narrator calls a "journey of discovery." This journey devotes much focus on the role that love, as a mode of vision, could play in binding the spaces that are represented by the grand narratives to be dichotomous and difficult, if impossible, to meet. The narrator's description of old Sana'a as one of "the world best kept secrets," who, along with many others who do visit it, is "instantly fallen under its captivating spell,"[10] is discussed in the film in relation to its cultural abundance, rather than to its exoticism. In other words, the narrator tries to prove that the Arab and Yemeni people have just as much creativity, intelligence and beauty as people in the West. Federico, from his viewpoint the story is told, comes to understand the Yemeni culture not from Eurocentric eyes but from the prism of an interactive contact enacted by mutual borrowing and human exchange.

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[8] Ben Hirsi (dir.), *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a). The film director uses the style of travel writers to refashion himself as a discoverer who gets access to spaces that are traditionally segregated.

[9] Bader Ben Hirsi, "I Wanted to Make a Film Which People Everywhere Would Understand," Interview by Larissa Bender, *Qantara.de*, trans., Michael Lawton, 2006, <https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-bader-ben-hirsi-i-wanted-to-make-a-film-which-people-everywhere-would>.

[10] Ben Hirsi (dir.), *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a).

Through the interactive contact between Federico and the indigenous people, the film disproves the Western stereotypic representation of Arab and Yemeni people as antagonistic and threatening. For instance, the American film *Rules of Engagement* (2000) by William Friedkin represents Old Sana'a as a backdrop to an American ethnocentric plot and Yemeni people as terrorists and rabid killers. The open and excessive racism against Yemenis in this film can be compared to the blatant racism against blacks in the American film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) by D W Griffith; both Yemenis and blacks are framed in these two films in a totally unconvincing manner as a violent menace to the American civilization.[11] On the contrary, the local people in the Yemeni film under study are shown in absolutely different ways; they are seen as civilized, sociable and friendly rather than as barbaric and hostile, with the intention to hurt Westerners. For example, Tariq is seen to perceive Federico not as an alien but as if he was his elder brother. He consults him in every case and sees him as worthy of his trust and friendship. The Italian photographer Federico, in response, perceives him as a source of interpersonal and intercultural enrichment. He is also drawn into his local assistant's problems. The various encounters between them open the possibilities of building confidence and reciprocal relations between the so-called "East" and "West". Thus, the American-centrism and racism in the above-mentioned Hollywood movies are replaced by multiculturalism and anti-racism. This conveys that human relationship and exchange can never be restricted by borders like race, color or even religion.

Another example that challenges the Hollywood demeaning representation of Arabs and Muslims as dreaded foes to the religious or cultural Other is the cultural encounter between Federico and the two Yemeni shopkeepers. In this meeting, Federico is seen greeting them in the Islamic way and in their native tongue "*al-salam 'alaykum"* (Peace be upon you). They, in response, return the greeting with what is better than it, saying: "*wa-'alaykum al-salam wa-rahmat Allah"* (And Peace and blessings of Allah be also upon you).[12] If one focuses on the tone of their voices, he/she will find out that the word *as-slam* is stressed as a symbolic way of synonymizing Islam with peace. The smile is simultaneously written on their faces and the young person is seen raising his arm as a gesture of literally celebrating Federico and metaphorically intercultural communication.

[11] See William Friedkin, dir., *Rules of Engagement*, Bruce Greenwood, 2000; D. W. Griffith, dir. *The Birth of a Nation* (Divid W. Griffith Corporation, 1915).
[12] Ben Hirsi (dir.), *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a).

As the dialogue goes further, the Yemeni shopkeepers are seen warmly handshaking with him, saying: "*ahlan wa-sahlan"* (Hello and welcome).[13] In Arabic language, saying *ahlan* to someone signifies that the addressee is identified as a member of the *ahl* (kin). Viewed from this angle, they consider Federico as a close friend and as a member of the Yemeni community, because they greet him with one of the friendliest greetings. To highlight their friendly feelings, they are seen narrating some jokes to Federico in order to draw a smile on his face and create a cheerful and cordial atmosphere. They end up their meeting with exchanging a friendly handshake, accompanied by the phrase "*ma'a as-salama*"[14] (go with peace) as an emphasis on the idea that Arabs and Yemenis are open to peace and tolerance. It is on the account of having felt at home that Federico expresses his deep feelings of love and regard of Yemen. That is, Yemen is constructed as a home not only for the Self but also for the Other. In so doing, the common humanity in the Yemeni context is depicted to be louder than the ideological barriers. The camera also shoots their meeting from an eye's level perspective in support for the idea that the Yemeni people do not necessarily perceive the Other from ethnocentric or stereotyped discriminatory perspective. This is not to be read as an idealization of the Self at the expense of the Other, but as a metaphor for the possibilities of establishing a balanced relationship between people of different cultures.

As the film devotes special attention to women's issues, the stereotypical widespread images depicting Yemeni women as restrained or, at least, weak and subordinate are called into question. Some scenes of the film show them as being visible and self-confident and as having a decision at the household. For example, in the dialogue between Tariq and his sister, the latter is seen to have the decision not only in the household but also in the former's marriage. She is seen initiating the talk and issuing the commands, advice and instructions. Her manner of discussion appears to be authoritarian because she resorts to coercion—slapping him in the face—when she has failed to secure his consent for the arranged marriage. In another striking example, the officer is seen to be subordinate to his wife who is depicted to have an authoritarian character. In one of his interviews, the film director interrogates the essentialist image of Arab and Yemeni women as followers to men and

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

stresses that "women in the Arab world and in Yemen are very strong; they have a voice and they have rights."[15]

Yemeni women are also not visualized to be secluded and shrouded by the veil, because it is seen to neither bar them from the public life nor reduce their activities. The first encounter between Federico and Amal, an egg seller, shows her to have a voice and self-confidence. She sees him as one of her clients irrespective of his national, racial, gender and religious background. Contrary to the mainstream Hollywood films that depict Muslim women to be confined in the harem space, Amal is shown confidently and boldly struggling to secure an independent source of income. Furthermore, the essentialist representation of the veil being a symbol of women's oppression is profoundly challenged; Amal's veil is shown to never constraint her freedom. Her character seems even to be more powerful than that of her White interlocutor, as it is manifest in her initiation of the speech.

AMAL: *Frederico! sabah al-khayr*. [Federico! Good morning.]
FEDERICO: *sabah al-nur, Amal*. [Ah, good morning, Amal.][16]

Language, race, religion and gender are not seen in the Yemeni context as borders that can keep people apart from communicating with each other. Here, the Muslim Yemeni woman is seen exchanging greeting responses with the Christian Western man, using Arabic language. In another interview between them, Amal is seen capable to draw his attention to the beauty of some aspects of the traditional culture by showing him *Nagsh* (henna painting art) in a cheerful mood and attractive manner, saying "Bon appetite."[17] Although *Nagsh* in Yemen and even in the Arab world is almost, if not exclusively, used by women, her mode of promotion gets Federico to fall under the captivating spell of such traditional art. He consequently adopts and adapts it to fit with his desire in an indication to how cultural encounter can result in cultural borrowing and exchange. This reinforces Edward Said idea that histories and cultures are overlapped. If we conjure up Rudyard Kipling's notorious observation "[t]he East is East and the West is West and never shall the twain meet," stressed in his controversial poem entitled "The Ballad of East and West,"[18] we find out that Kipling's mental blockade of the commonalities and compatibility between the East and West is

[15] Ben Hirsi, Interview by Larissa Bender, ""I Wanted to Make a Film Which People Everywhere Would Understand."
[16] Ben Hirsi (dir.), *Yawm Jadid fi Sana'a al-Qadima* (A New Day in Old Sana'a).
[17] Ibid.
[18] Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West (1889)," www.poetryloverspage.com

replaced in this Yemeni film by Rabindranath Tagore's assertive response that "[t]he twain shall meet in amity, peace, and mutual understanding."[19]

The meeting between the outsider Federico and the insider Amal draws our attention to the role the cultural encounter might play in the creation of a merging space that trespass the dualism of tradition and modernity, man and woman, and insider and outsider; that is, the interacting contacts between them symbolize the possibility, though sometimes necessity, of constructing a blended space via which people of different cultures connect with each other in a way that neither reduces tradition nor privileges modernity, but rather subjects all of them to constructive criticism. In the Yemeni tradition, *nagsh* is often done on the hand or feet of a woman, but this tradition of gender roles is seen reconfigured in a new way; *nagsh* is done on the back of a man. In this way, the film emphasizes the point stressed by many postcolonial theorists like Fanon, Said, Bhabha and Hall, among others, about identity as being always open to change, renovation and transformation. Thus, the "third space" is represented in the film not only as a site of enunciation through which the individual resists to be situated within an essentialist framework but also as constant debunking of the concept of fixity and homogeneity.

In fact, any race, class or religion is split within itself. Viewed from this point, the images of Arabs as a homogenous entity seem totally unconvincing, if not bizarre. This film depicts that heterogeneity is inherent even within the same family. In the dialogue between Tariq and his sister, we see huge differences between them with respect to their conceptualization of marriage. His sister goes in support for the arranged marriage set by the rules of tradition, while Tariq is inclined to the idea of marrying for love set by the modern perspective. He is seen quite happy to uncover the hidden beauty of what he thought to be his fiancée while dancing in the street with her long hair uncovered before the sunrise. He says: "She looked beautiful. She took my breath away."[20] By contrast, his sister displays her shock and irritation of how a respectable woman like Bilqis can dare to do so, because she considers such act as a violation of the rules prescribed by her prestigious family. Moreover, his sister expresses her objection for her brother to work as a photographer and asks him to quit such job, because she sees it as inconsistent with his social class. On the contrary, Tariq sees that the individual's career is not to be determined by restrictive barriers like class belonging, but by his/her preferences and the requirements of job markets.

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[19] Cited in Kwame Gyekye, *Beyond Cultures: Perceiving a Common Humanity: Ghanian Philosophical Studies, III* (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2004), p. 140.

[20] Bader Ben Hirsi, dir. *A New Day in Old Sana'a.*

Although the film is not uncritical of class hierarchy and the mechanisms of social domination within the Yemeni context, it shows that there is no open conflict carried out between them. Through women's gossips, the film unveils that class structure of the Yemeni society is mainly divided into three categories, with Bilqis's class in the top and Inas's class in the bottom.[21] However, the relationships between these classes are shown to be slippery and complex rather than stable and unitary. For instance, the film displays a group of middle-class women gathering on the street and talking about their desire to be invited to Bilqis wedding. However, their middle social class does not seem to qualify them for the attendance of the high class' wedding. One of them is heard saying, "Maybe they think we're not good enough for them."[22] As the events of the film develop, the boundary between them seems to fall away in favor of constructing third space which brings them all together. The film shows situations in which the aristocratic family requires the help and intervention not only of the middle-class members, but also of those of the lower-class. The third space can be understood, here, in terms of creating not only possibilities but also overriding necessities of meeting between poor and rich and between low and high social classes in both private and public life. Hence, one can reveal that human exchange and friendship between people of different social backgrounds seem quite inevitable whatever the socially constructed borders might be.

It is worth noting that identity is represented in the film as a confusing puzzle; the more you try to resolve it, the more you reveal its ambiguity. In this regard, the identification on the ground of race and class proves to be not only instable, but also vulnerable and fragile. The aristocratic daughter Bilqis, who is scheduled to marry the noble man Tariq after three days, is shown to be unhappy of her arranged marriage, although her fiancé is of her social class. This unfolds in her discontented talks with the female servant and her younger sisters. She even does not want to be reminded of her wedding party in an indication of the consequences of the arranged marriage on the individual's psychology. Further, she is seen attracted to the alien photographer Federico. Their love is represented to defy the borders of race and religion. Shortly before her marriage, Bilqis is shown passionately observing Federico while he is listening and dancing on an Egyptian song about mutual love in a

[21] Class discrimination seem to be a world-wide phenomenon. But, the structures upon which it is established might differ from one context to another. In Yemen, the phenomenon of class stratification has been almost never based on economic condition, but primarily on descent and secondarily on occupation. This phenomenon has passed down through generations, so it has to be discussed in relation to the socio-historical construction of the identity politics by which the dominant classes legitimize and maintain their control over less privileged or under-class groups.

[22] Bader Ben Hirsi (dir.) *A New Day in Old Sana'a*.

signification for the potential of cultural commonalities to overcome racial and religious differences. The camera's intercutting between Federico, Bilqis and walking people on the street seems to affirm that identity is always on the move. It is on this account that the relationships between what have been dominantly perceived as dichotomous can turn out to be more intimate and reciprocal.

In parallel, the complexity of identity is reflected through the requited love between the upper-class Tariq and the lower-class Inas. At the beginning, Inas could not dare to disclose her love towards Tariq because of her knowledge of the huge gap that the Yemeni society has constructed between Tariq's social strata and hers. However, after Tariq's identity has undergone a process of transformation, she starts to implicitly disclose the information about her confused identity. The *nagsh* (henna tattoo) scene represents Inas, who serves as a mouthpiece for the lower class, as being rich in beauty as well as chastity. It therefore poses her stereotypic identity as a subject for vigorous revision. Further, her identity begins to unfold in a way that questions the prescribed images of her social class held by the dominant group. As a service provider, her job is depicted to be very artistic and creative in an attempt to reconfigure the social hierarchy that is based on occupation. Further, this meeting highlights her intellectual capability and her ethical concerns. When Tariq asks her about Bilqis's beauty, she cleverly and ethically answers that the term "beauty" cannot be defined in a clear-cut manner, because, as she states, "there is inner and outer beauty."[23] She escapes classification of people within the hierarchy of this is beautiful or ugly.

Most importantly, the dominant story of the dress—Tariq has given to Bilqis as a gift—being stolen is confronted with a counter-alternative from below, from the viewpoint of the lower-class Inas. When Tariq asks her about the credibility of the story, she argumentatively hypothesizes that the dress might not be stolen, but rather found on the street by someone who believed that no one wants it. She offers probability rather than an absolute judgment, opening the space for further investigation. To complicate the plot, Inas is seen facing charge of being a robber of the dress. This dominant story is quickly and widely circulated. However, the individual's resistant voice of the subalternized Inas triumphs over the dominant historiography. She, in attendance of the police investigators and Bilqis' family, disproves the dominant story as unfair and imprecise. With the testimony of two females' witnesses—the female servant Madiha and Bilqis' younger sister—Inas' story is proved to be credible and Bilqis is rendered liar and cunning. In the end of the debate, Bilqis' mother is

[23] Ibid.

seen sighing for her failure to nurture her daughters in the right way, saying: "God only knows what kind of daughters I have raised."[24] This means that she comes to understand that identity is not given or fixed, but varies according to upbringing and circumstances. The way in which the truth is articulated in the film elicits the viewers' sympathy with the oppressed and calls them to read history not simply from the point of view of the dominant class, but more importantly from the perspective of the dominated.

On this account, Tariq becomes very clingy to Inas in spite of his sister's effort to dissuade him. Unlike his sister who is mobilized by social hierarchy and prescribed tradition, Tariq is enticed by Inas' personality regardless of the class identity that society tries to categorize her within. In articulation of the love marriage, he addresses his sister: "I feel I am truly in love with her."[25] In response, Inas is seen to have the same feeling. In her conversation with Amal, she declaims: "I love him with all my heart."[26] In so doing, the film sets the power of love against the force of social hierarchy. In parallel, Tariq and Bilqis belong to the same socially constructed class, but such classification proves inadequate to bring them into harmony. They see that the interests of their social class do not meet their individual interests. This means that what might be deemed worthy for their families or class can be of no value to them as individuals. Viewed from this point, the film emphasizes that human relations and social exchanges defy to be essentially determined by a set of class, gender or even religious constraints.

The mutual love between Tariq and Inas lays the groundwork for a balanced cross-class relationship between the upper and lower classes. Their love story is presented in the film as a metaphorical resistance against the practices of hegemonic matchmaking. The director, through the voice-over narrator, celebrates their encouragement to cross the class boundary and pave the way for inter-class marriage. In figure 21, Tariq is seen setting his love against the backdrop of intersecting historical and socio-political factors like class and social status. He is shown knocking the door of the lower-class Inas in an act of challenging class hierarchy. However, as the narrator comments, "what may appear so simple in the West was in fact something form of complex here."[27]

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

Figure 21. Tariq knocks the door of the lower-class Inas (Ben Hirsi, *A New Day in Old Sana'a*, 2005).

In the Yemeni society, it is unusual for a higher-class and middle-class man and woman to marry a lower-class woman and man. Such practice is almost considered to bring scandal and dishonor to the entire family and tribe. Thus, Tariq's attempt to break up such intensely rooted tradition is to be recognized as a rebellious act and as an important step to build bridges between people of different classes. However, the director does not turn a blind eye to the complexity of social reform in a context where class hierarchy is deeply ingrained in the identity politics because it has been passed down through generations. In this respect, Tariq's facial expression shows him to be deeply conflicted between whether to follow his heart and mind or to protect his family honor (see figure 22). His oscillation is even manifest from the initial phase of his dialogue with Inas. He says: "I love you, Inas. But I am engaged to Bilqis and I do not know what to do about that."[28] Although they reach, at the end of the dialogue, into an agreement to elope together at the midnight, the film ends with Tariq conceding to his family's pressures, leaving Inas to nightly wait the day in which the class boundary would be bridged, as shown respectively in figures 22 and 23.

[28] Ibid.

Figure 22. Tariq's conflicting position between his individual freedom and his family's wishes (Ben Hirsi, *A New Day in Old Sana'a*, 2005).

Figure 23. Inas nightly waits for the sunshine of a new day in old Sana'a (Ben Hirsi, *A New Day in Old Sana'a*, 2005).

In figure 22, Tariq's teardrop is seen rolling down on his cheek not simply because he is moved against his will, but importantly because he could not fulfill his promise represented by literally eloping with Inas and metaphorically breaking up class barriers. The film ends with Tariq's conflicting position between tradition and renewal. Nevertheless, it opens the door for the sunshine of a new day in which the socially constructed gaps would be bridged. The resistance in this film, like that in Mohamed Khan's *Factory Girl* (2014), operates on the philosophy of hope. Driven by the desire for class and gender equality, Inas nightly "set off towards the fourth bridge where she hope to meet Tariq . . . if not today, then may be tomorrow,"[29] as the voice-over narrator elaborates. The music accompanying both the voice-over narration and the images of Inas while going forth and back between her house and the fourth bridge signifies a mixture of pain and hope. The last shot of the film displays an image of the Old city of Sana'a sparkling in the dawn light in a metaphorical affirmation of the imperative of social change. In so doing, the film opens the space not only for rectification of history but also for building bridges between people of different classes and cultures, as it is represented respectively by the mutual love between the upper-class Tariq and the lower-class Inas and between the Yemeni Muslim woman Bilqis and the Christian Italian photographer Federico.

To conclude, the film foregrounds for the "active reappropriation of hybrid cultural identities, and the disruption of homogeneity in all its forms."[30] It shows that the notion of

[29] Ibid.

[30] Michael Syrotinski, *Deconstruction and the Postcolonial: At the Limits of Theory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 26.

identity cannot be understood as stable or straightforward, because it is influenced by many social and psychological factors that keep it in a constant transformation. It illustrates how love liberates us from being shrouded within the illusion of cultural and social hierarchy, because it operates through commonalities and consequently makes us perceive cultural differences as a matter of mutual enrichment rather than as a mental blockade in the face of cross-cultural and cross-class communication. Love is intersected in the film with the idea of openness. From this angle, it is seen as a bridge between the Orient and Occident, man and woman, tradition and modernity, and lower and upper classes, as well. In so doing, the film can be read as a plea for the culture of recognition where the encounter between these seemingly incompatible binaries is shown to be governed by co-existence and love. Viewed from this perspective, the notion of resistance articulated in the film seems compatible with the theorization of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Ranajit Guha, among others, who seek to deconstruct the binary discourses and replace them with a hybrid, non-coercive alternative.

3.2. Pursuit of Women's Agency: A Female Child as an Icon of Change in Khadijah al-Salami's *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced, 2014).

Khadijah al-Salami is a famous Yemeni film director and activist. She produced many documentaries among them are *Nisa' al-Yemen* (Women of Yemen, 1990), *Ard Saba* (Land of Saba, 1997), *al-Yemen thu-l-Alf Wijha* (Yemen of a Thousand Face, 2000), *Ghariba fi Mawtiniha* (A Stranger in Her Homeland, 2005), and *al-Sarkha* (The Cry, 2011),[31] most of which deal with women's pursuit for freedom. However, her film *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced, 2014), which is considered as the first Yemeni feature film produced by a female director, deals with the child bride's resistance against the practice of early marriage.

This film narrates the story of Nujoum, a young Yemeni girl who is forced to marry at the age of ten as a proactive step to protect the family honor. The incidence of her elder sister being raped has turned the life of her entire family upside down; it has compelled them to desert their village and migrate to the city in order to escape the public scandal. Pushed by the

[31] Rafiq Sehali, "Dayf wa-Masira" (Guest and procession), an Interview with Khaija Al Salami, *France 24 Channel*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODUIY3tJYco (Accessed 1/9/2018).

hardship they have faced in the city as well as by the conventional logics of honor, Nujoum's parents marry her to a man three times her age and she is forced to live with him in a remote rural village. There she suffers physical and psychological abuse at the hands of her spouse and her mother-in-law. However, she does not succumb to her socially predetermined fate. Adopting various strategies of resistance, she coerces her spouse to bring her back to her parents' home. When she finds that her parents' position sides against her right in divorce, she flees to the courthouse where she not only gets divorced, but also recovers her right in education as she happily ends up joining school. In so doing, the director opens the door for the enforcement of underage marriage laws and for the legitimization of women's rights in marriage, divorce, litigation and education.

Thematically, women's resistance against being driven into forced or unsatisfying union represents a common thread among the films under study that address gender issues. But, this point is relegated to secondary importance in films like Chahine's *Chaos* (2007) and Zoughi's *Kharboucha* (2008) and it is discussed in relation to class and profession in films like Khan's *Factory girl* (2014) and Ben Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005). Unlike Khan's and Ben Hirsi's films in which the discourse of subalternity is expressed in terms of class and profession, this film is exclusively devoted to problematizing the subaltern agency in terms of age. Methodologically, this film, like all the films under study, works on two interrelated axes: criticism of social injustice and celebration of the voice of resistance articulated in the current film by the female child. Inspired by both subaltern and feminist studies, this section explores how the experience of oppression turns the female child into a vehement rebel against patriarchy and how she manages to make her voice be legally, socially and politically heard. Simultaneously, it goes back and forth to explore how woman is socialized to accept her supposed inferiority since her birth throughout, and how the socialization of woman to remain marginal is resisted.

The first shot of the film displays Nujoum deeply immersing in contemplation in a way exceeding the extent to which a person at her age can do. This conveys that she carries a burden that is too heavy for a woman to carry on her own, let alone a female child. She is doubly oppressed both as a woman and as a child. But, in contrast to Spivak's argument of the incapability of the subaltern woman to speak in a context that favors colonizer over colonized and man over woman, the female child is shown capable to articulate her right in divorce in a context complicated by tribal conventions as well as absence of law governing the minimum age of marriage. The first scene implies that the patriarchal oppression could not render the female child submissive and obedient, but rather stimulates her desire for

liberation and fuels her cognitive and creative capacities to face social hierarchy founded on age and gender.

In contradiction with Spivak's idea about the subaltern being necessarily mobilized by another consciousness due to lacking self-sufficient consciousness, the female child's resistance in the film is shown to be profoundly driven by her own self-consciousness, by the experience of oppression. Fanon's conception of the self-consciousness being "achieved only through conflict and through the risk that conflict implies"[32] can be applied to the context of woman's struggle against patriarchy, though the means of conflict differs in both contexts. The female child's non-violent resistance is shown to be mainly the product of oppression, rather than an outcome of elitist mobilization. At first, Nujoum is socialized to accept her subordination to her parents in marriage. But, after she has been physically and psychologically abused at the hands of her spouse and mother-in-law, she turns into a vehement rebel against their patriarchal authority. She compels her spouse to bring her back home in a challenge to the hierarchal discourse of the dominant man and subordinate woman. In so doing, the director proves that the relation between domination and subordination is complex and transformational rather than unproblematic and static.

Although she has overcome the aspect of patriarchy pertaining to the domination of her spouse and mother-in-law, she is now facing another aspect of patriarchy represented by the institution of the family, the paternal domination. Pressed by the notion of family honor and the convention dictating that parents have to either discipline their daughter so as to make her obedient wife or to return the money her spouse pays in exchange for marriage, her parents decide to get her back to her husband. The film does not intend to condemn her parents as being cruel because their identity is bestowed upon them by the patriarchal codes. Thus, all of them are depicted as victims of the patriarchal discourse, which the film intends to rectify. The common strategy within sexism, as Sara Mills have argued, consigns women to subordinate position.[33] On the contrary, the current film locates the agency of change in the peripheral character Nujoum in the sense that she does not accept to be a blind follower of her parents. When her mother sends her to buy bread, she cleverly keeps the bread money to pay it for the taxi that is going to take her to the court building. Here, the film deconstructs the image of woman and child as deficient since the child bride's thinking appears to be more operative, productive and effective than it is deemed to be. Her cognitive and psychological power is respectively highlighted in figures 24 and 25.

[32] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 218
[33] See Mills, *Discourse*, p. 38.

Figure 24. Nujoum takes a grip of the bread money (al-Salami, *I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced*, 2014).

Figure 25. Nujoum bites her husband's hand to set her free (al-Salami, *I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced*, 2014).

In figure 24, Nujoum is seen keeping a tight grip of her money; she rejects to give it to the baker. Freedom, for her, seems to be dearer than bread. Her facial expression conveys that what is in her mind has nothing to do with eating, but with how to set free from the prison of patriarchy. Her mind appears to be more alert and active than absent and passive because she cognitively struggles to make an end for her forced marriage. In so doing, her agency is articulated not only socially and politically, but also intellectually. From the patriarchal perspective, she is considered as unruly wife and she has to be consequently kept under strict male surveillance. The patriarchal tropes are implicitly embedded in the power of the gaze where the patriarch is represented as the master of surveillance. When she is about to get in the taxi, her spouse is shown (see figure 25) roughly grappling her arm and pulling her towards her parents' home so as to discipline her. Unlike the mainstream discourse that homogenizes women as submissive, weak and subordinate to men's order, the filmic discourse under analysis provides a counter-stereotypic alternative. The female child is seen courageously reluctant to follow her husband. Figure 25 shows her hardly striving to split from his grip. When he insists to bring her back home by force, she bites his hand in an effort to escape his firm grasp. She then runs away and goes to the court. This scene affirms what Michel Foucault argues, as cited by Sara Mills in her book *Discourse*, that power cannot be possessed, but rather exposed, challenged and undermined. Here, the male spouse is consigned to a less powerful position. He comes to understand that power is more complex

than one might imagine. As evidence, he finds himself helpless to domesticate his wife neither by consent nor by coercion.

By contrast, the child bride is seen capable to voice out her right in divorce through legal activism. The camera takes us to the courthouse in order to trace her passion for freedom and her capability of argumentation. At the first day, Nujoum hears many voices that seek justice; among them are those of two women who complain against the oppressive practices of their husbands. In so doing, the female child's response to the form of patriarchal oppression is situated within wider hidden struggles of the minority groups and women for social and gender justice. However, escaping the abusive marriage in the case of the female child appears very difficult because the society is not used to hear a girl at her age voicing out her legal demands. Thus, the judge does not give her an opportunity to convey her complaint not due to age bias, but because he does not expect her to be one of the litigants. On her part, she promises not to set her foot in her parents' house till her voice gets heard and her agency gets restored. In so doing, the film celebrates the heroism of the female protagonist for paving the way to reform the family law in a country lacking legislation pertaining to the minimum age of marriage.

In this regard, Edward Said's notion that the marginalized people have the potential to "resist power or rewrite it in terms that restore agency to themselves"[34] can be extended to analyze the idea of resistance articulated in this film. The female child, from whose perspective the film is narrated, is represented to have the potential to deconstruct the patriarchal discourse and reconstruct an alternative vision in which women's and children's struggle for their rights is seen as an integral struggle for human rights. On this account, the director goes beyond the image of woman or child as a victim to that of political and legal agent of social change. In spite of still being young, Nujoum appears to have a very powerful character led by logic rather than by emotion. When the judge asks her: "What are you doing here, my daughter?" She utters only three words, "I want divorce."[35] She, with a powerful gaze and sharper tone, answers not in a manner of supplication, but demand. The clarity and brevity of her words also undermines social hierarchy that is based on age and gender. The judge becomes more astonished to hear such seemingly unprecedented demand from a girl in such age. At the same time, he finds himself in a challenging situation, because there is no age restriction for marriage in the Yemeni family law. When the judge tries to question the

[34]Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture*, p. xiv.

[35] Khadijah al-Salami, dir., *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced), Hoopoe Film, Michel Lafon Publishing, 2014.

story of how a daughter at her age could be married, she promptly repeats the same answer, but in a sharper voice than before. Her confident answers make the judge believe in the credibility of her story. He, thus, finds no way but to sympathize with her cause and pursue justice on her behalf despite the risk he might face. The film seems to present its entire story from the point of view of the child bride so as to elicit total sympathy with her and to build solidarity against the practice of child marriage and not against the entrapped individuals. Once she replies to the judge's inquiry about her age and her place of birth, the camera takes us to the village where she was born to show us that her parents have been entrapped by ignorance as it is symbolically conveyed through picturing the village under the cover of darkness.

The camera, through a flashback structure, captures the tensions she creates at the moment of her birth to show how gender is socially constructed in the Yemeni tribal context. Her elder sister, who serves as a mouthpiece of humanity rather than of gender dogma, is seen happily celebrating her birth, informing her father that they get a beautiful daughter like her. In contrast to her ungendered position, her father, who represents the discourse of the family institution, expresses his resentment and rage of being a daughter and not a boy as it is seen in figure 26. His darkened face, which is lit by low-key lighting, shows him to be filled with gloom and suppressed anger. Had she been born a son instead of a daughter, her father's reaction would have been significantly different. The struggle over power is also reflected in the ideology of naming. While her sister insists to name her Nujoum (stars of the sky) because she wants her to be starred and noticed, her father tries helplessly to name her Nujoud, which suggests concealment, because he wants her to be obscured and unnoticed. This reinforces Simone de Beauvoir's argument that gender is an imposed cultural construct. As de Beauvoir states, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman."[36]

[36] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 273.

Figure 26. Close-up shot of Nujoum's father capturing his resentment and sorrow for having a female birth (al-Salami, *I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced*, 2014).

Although the historical and cultural practices confer dominant status and privileges to males, particularly male elders, patriarchy is represented as more complex than mere oppressive. When it is said that husband has an upper position in the Yemeni context, this does not mean that he can forcibly control his wife's properties and earnings. The scene reveals that Nujoum's mother flees to her father's house because her husband has sold the cow he gave her as a dowry. In the tribal Yemeni context, his act cannot go unpunished, because any hurt the husband does against his wife is perceived as offence to her overall family. In an indication of the complex and contradictory status of woman in the patriarchal context, the father-in-law is seen rebuking his daughter's spouse when he comes to regain her. He levels his threat against him, saying: "People's daughters are not toys in your hands."[37] Although the latter satisfies the former with two rams and accepts to compensate his wife with a cow and ox instead of the cow he sold, the wife is seen to have the last word in the matter. To complicate the consequences of patriarchy on both men and women, the latter is forced into polygamous marriage by his father. On this account, he is victimized by being driven against his will and by being further burdened with economic and familial responsibilities not of his own making in order to personally adhere to his father's word and socially to the tribal norms. Apart from its occasionally negative consequences on the man, polygamy is viewed to legitimize gender asymmetry on the foundation of religious doctrine. This poses a real challenge to the question of gender equality within the Islamic patriarchal

[37] Al-Salami, dir., *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced).

society. And this is why Muslim feminists try to provide a counter-interpretation of history and religion, which might differ from the male-centric understanding.

Advancing feminist approach, the director criticizes harshly the stereotypic ideology of woman as sex object because it acts as guide for the social behavior towards her. In this respect, the film takes us to the rape scene. The rape happens after the rapist makes sure that her father and brothers are absent. It is triggered in the rapist's brain that woman is just sex object. In this sense, the sex object stereotype directs his thoughts and behaviors in a sexual orientation. In a morally dishonest manner, he asks Najla for a cup of water, but his mind is oriented towards something else, towards sex. When she gets in to bring him water, he joins her, locks the house and then inhumanly rapes her. This scene shows how the stereotypic perception of woman as an object of desire could turn a man into a monster. The camera displays Nujoum knocking the door and crying as she hears her elder sister shouting. Such moments are accompanied by sad music, signifying the need to discard the culture that looks at woman as a flesh rather than as a spirit. Simultaneously, the sky is seen covered by dark and red overlapping clouds, implying its sympathy with the objectified woman against man's physical violence and, importantly, against the patriarchal culture that secretes gender oppression.

Although rape has traumatic effects on the physical and psychological condition of the raped victim,[38] the patriarchal society neglects almost such effects and concerns only about the question of family honor. Unlike the incidence of rape in the Egyptian film *Chaos* (2007) by Chahine, which gives rise to socio-political upheavals against the rapist, the rape case in the current film is negotiated and settled according to the patriarchal honor codes, dictating to keep it within the shroud of secrecy and shame and enforcing the rapist to marry her raped victim. Conceived in this way, the raped woman is doubly oppressed, both by the rapist's sexual violence who escapes punishment and by the familial and social conventions that enforce her to repress her pain on the consideration of being a source of shame. That is, in spite of being victimized, the social blame and disgrace are directed to her and to her family, and not to her offender. In so doing, the director aims not to define woman as archetypal victim, but to reconfigure the patriarchal conception of family honor.

[38]See respectively Lynda Holmstrom and Ann Burgess, *The Victim of Rape: Institutional Reactions* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1991), p. 87; and Ann Burgess, *Victimology: Theories and Applications* (Burlington: Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2017).

The patriarchal conception of family honor is seen incapable to solve the pervasive problem of rape, but rather adds further complication to the already complex situation of woman. The incidence of rape is represented to turn the life of the raped woman's family upside down. They are compelled to sell their land and livestock and to desert their home and migrate to the city in order to escape the public scandal. The father is seen masking his face during their departure from the village. Their departure is also associated with sad music to articulate their unspeakable pain that they try to keep it secret. Moreover, the camera pictures the villagers while they are intently gazing at them with disfavoring and blaming eyes. In this way, the film criticizes the double standard constructed by patriarchy where the psychological punishment and reproach are not directed to the male rapist, but to the entire family of the female victim.

Persuaded by the tale of family honor and pressed by financial hardship, Nujoum's parents transform her childhood from happiness to tragedy through forcing her into an early arranged marriage. Because things make more sense in relation to its opposite, the film contrasts between the late marriage that is based on consent and mutual love and the early marriage that is based on parental arrangement and hegemony. In the former, the groom and bride ceremonies are seen full of joy and happiness. The groom and male attendants are shown celebrating the wedding with chanted songs that embrace the idea of mutual love and go against women's exploitation. The bride is seen brightly smiling and happily dancing in a lovely white dress. In the latter, the bride is not attracted by the wedding scene as a whole, because of being devoid of its content. She is still so young that she could not understand the idea and implications of marriage. To further condemn the practice of the early marriage, the camera displays that the bride's garment and ring are respectively so dark and loose that they fit neither with the wedding situation nor with the girl's age. Thus, the wedding ceremony is seen destitute of mirth and pleasure. While the female guests are seen happily dancing, ululating and applauding in the former setting, they are shown expressing their intense emotional shock in the latter, because they could not imagine seeing such a female child robbed of her childhood.

In an outcry against the early marriage, the director juxtaposes the pleasure of childhood against the Yemeni oppressive traditions. The child bride sells her engagement ring for a doll, which appears to be of more value to her than the wedding-ring. On the day of her wedding, she abandons the party and slips her wedding dress off to play hopscotch with her girlfriends in the nearby street because she perceives the party as dull and meaningless. However, her attempts to articulate her rights as child are repressed by the patriarchal codes

that define masculinity in terms of having domination over women and children. Swayed by the myth of shame, her father is seen forcibly dragging her to her mother and stripping her of her doll—which she restores and clutches during the wedding ceremonies—saying: "Take your daughter and prepare her. Her husband has been waiting for her since an hour. It is a shame."[39] The mode of presenting the wedding events elicits the audience's sympathy and makes them aware that the defect and shame lay primarily in the patriarchal mentality that favors spoiled and unjust tradition over child's and human's rights. The big problem is that the early arranged marriage is legitimized on religious basis. The patriarchal religious authority is seen using religion as a political weapon to help them control women and children, and hence exclude them from enjoying their human rights. In so doing, the film director criticizes the male-centric interpretation of the Islamic religion and calls for rereading Qur'an and Hadith from women's perspectives—from the viewpoint of the oppressed—as Amina Wadud and Fatima Mernissi respectively did in order to resolve the flaw of such interpretation and implement legal reforms in the family law.[40]

It is noteworthy to mention that patriarchy takes advantages of people's ignorance. That is why women in the rural areas are more socialized to accept and approve the idea of early marriage. While women in the city are shown expressing some kinds of shock and dismay at the incidence of the female child's marriage, men and women in the countryside do not appear to regard it as uncommon. This means that spatiality does matter in the representation of patriarchy. In the countryside, the male party is imbued with violent dance. The child bride, who clutches her doll, is celebrated with gunfire and not with the feelings of love and mercy, because the tribal men try almost to repress or hide such feelings on the consideration of being contradictory to the definition of masculinity. Swayed by the tribal, patriarchal culture that links virility to male potential of exercising sexuality, the groom invades her

[39]Al-Salami (dir.), *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Age 10 and Divorced).

[40] In her re-reading of the Qur'anic account, Wadud argues that Qur'an does not distinguish between man and woman in the process of creation of human kind and hence there is no essential difference in the value and traits attributed to one particular gender. The Qur'anic account of the creation of humankind signifies individual responsibility, because it points out that all humans share a single point of origin and a single point of return. See Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Rereading of the Sacred Text from a Woman Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 15-27. In her chapter "The Prophet and Woman," Mernissi goes back to reread the prophet's Hadith and show the social, cultural, and political reforms women, among them the prophet's wives, have led in the early day of Islam, which have aimed to break with the pre-Islamic practices and call into question the customs that rule the relations between the sexes. She provides several examples to demonstrate that women have been dynamic, influential, and full of initiatives in public as well as in private life. See Fatima Mernissi, *Woman and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 115-139.

body while she is falling asleep with her doll. He appears fearful and worried lest he could not deflower her, because he would become an object of mockery. His internal vulnerability pushes him to assail her chastity and innocence in a terrifying and violent manner, breaking his pledge not to touch her till after puberty.

The director makes use of the figurative acts represented, here, by animating the inanimate object; that is, the head of the doll is separated from her body in a metaphorical act of showing how early marriage robs girls from their childhood and generally from their human rights. In so doing, the film portrays early marriage as kind of rape legitimized by the patriarchal authority. Through several shots, the camera alternates between the private scene of the socially legitimate rape and the public scene of the male guests' dancing and beating drums so as to convey that the groom's private life is mostly conditioned by tribal norms. The alternating shots between the two scenes show that the societal norms to which he is conditioned could not bring him happiness and joy, but rather pain and misery. Thus, rethinking the practices of the arranged marriage would not only liberate woman from being victimized, but also save man from being imprisoned within the shackle of miserly unjust traditions.

Further, patriarchy is interpreted in the film as a complex phenomenon not only in terms of having a multitude of forms, but also of its challenge to the dichotomous understanding, man versus woman. It is seen throughout the film that the discourse of patriarchy is enacted and effectuated by both of them, and so does the resistance to it. In this regard, Nujoum is shown to be nightly abused by her spouse and daily by her mother-in-law, who seems sometimes to be more patriarchal than her son. Her mother-in-law is seen mercilessly enforcing her to do the domestic and field labor as parts of her duty; she obliges her to do both housework like baking, cleaning, washing, and serving, and outside labor such as bringing water, firewood, and pasture. However, vulnerability appears to be inherent in their dominant position and it is her heroic resistance that would make such vulnerability more visible. This emphasizes, in correspondence to Michel Foucault's assumption, that the dialectics of power relations is profoundly complex and actually non-linear. That is, the conditions of domination and subordination are not static.

In support of this view, the director shows that their attempts to manipulate her and keep her under their control are challenged by her numerous acts of resistance. She uses recalcitrance, screaming, silence, hunger strike and nervous resentment, among other means. Her husband and his mother's attempts to turn her into an obedient wife and socialize her to accept her current situation lead them only to an impasse. One day, she flees from the house

to a nearby mountain. After painstaking search, her husband finds her. But, once he tries to come close to her, she threatens him that she will throw herself off the mountain if he touches her. Her rebellious act makes him frightened and anxious, so he responds in supplication, promising that he will never come close to her. After he has become helpless to inhibit her recalcitrance, he uses a trick to bring her home not because of his desire to save her life, but because he perceives her as his own property for which he pays a lot of money to her father in exchange for marriage. Thus, he feels justified to use every means available so as to turn her insubordination into subordination, without being aware that his strategy of oppression would only bring him pain and misery, if not despair and disappointment. At another scene, she locks herself in the bath all the day till she falls into a swoon in a determination to exert every possible effort to enforce her separation. At this moment, her mother-in-law reaches to the conclusion that she cannot be controlled. "I have never seen insane and rebellious woman like her,"[41] she tells her son. Her resistant acts make them feel hopeless and helpless. Thus, her husband is disappointedly enforced to bring her back to her parents' home; he complains to them that she is recalcitrant.

Under the mantra that a woman's place is beside her husband, her parents uncomprehendingly decide to bring her back to her husband. As a result, she flees to the court to literally sue her husband for divorce and to metaphorically enact reforms in the Family Law Act in favor of protecting child's and woman's rights. It is important to mention that Nujoum's father and husband are not depicted as predators, but as victims of impoverishment and illiteracy. That is, the film suggests that their identity would change if the surrounding changed. During the divorce procedure, they appear unable to comprehend the problem. With a fearful look and worried eyes not of the court sentencing, but of the reaction of the sheikh,[42] Nujoum's husband repeats: "I married her according to her father's agreement and according to the Quran and Sunnah. So, tell me what crime have I committed?" He also cites the proverb "marry the eight-year old girl on my guarantee."[43] Her father also perplexedly justifies that "I married my daughter as all people do."[44] Their answers show them to be entrapped by societal norms that conform neither to human rights nor to the textual sources of

[41] Al-Salami (dir.), *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Age 10 and Divorced).

[42] Sheikh or Shaykh is a leader of a tribe or clan.

[43] Al-Salami (dir.), *Ana Nujoum bint al-'Ashira wa-Mutallaqa* (I am Nujoum, Age 10 and Divorced).

[44] Ibid.

religion. Thus, to fight patriarchy, we shall first, as subaltern studies theorists emphasize, rectify the elitist discourse so as to change the stereotypic perception of women.

Although the patriarchal discourse, in correspondence to Michel Foucault's definition of discourse and Louis Althusser's conceptualization of ideology, is represented in the film as complex and multilayer system in which the marital, familial, religious, tribal, and political institutions go hand in hand to exclude women from the arena of decision making and strip children of their rights, such discourse is simultaneously portrayed as vulnerable and prone to change. The defense of the husband, the father and the Sheikh of the female child's marriage proves to be so shaky and even defenseless. Nujoum's female lawyer, by comparison, provides a solid, well-grounded argument. She disrupts their patriarchal justification of the early marriage as follows:

> In the developing country, seventy thousand die per year due to female child's marriage, with Yemen having the largest share. We are lucky that she did not die as result of internal bleeding or even premature birth. Are you aware that you are committing a crime? Your children are your responsibilities. Even what the father has done is not religiously correct. Simply put, Nujoum is not physically and psychologically ready for marriage because she is still a child. We are going to waste the best days of her life. How a female child can understand the responsibility of parenting a house, husband or family. Nujoum's issue is not the only one, but we seek not to sentence her to death. [45]

Here, the female lawyer relies on evidence proving the adverse, tangible effects of the early marriage on the female children involved. While she is talking, the camera cuts occasionally from the Sheikh to the father and husband to show how her reasoning proves to be very compelling to them. The director seems to criticize the basic postulate that is deeply ingrained in the Yemeni culture, rather than the patriarchal norms of the individual characters, because they are, in fact, entrapped by the unjust social norms due to illiteracy and ignorance. In a state of astonishment, the Sheikh exclaims of how they could know the adverse consequences of the early marriage if they have never heard such talk before. However, he appears to value reputation over justice. Later, the Sheikh, who functions as a mediator and facilitator for the application of the verdict, transforms his tribal consciousness

[45] Ibid.

to that of human consciousness. And at the end of the film, Nujoum regains her agency through getting divorced from her husband and joining the school so as to help make an end or, at least, alleviate the rate of illiteracy and ignorance, and hence build the ground for gender equality.

To conclude, the film crafts non-hegemonic discourse narrated from perspective of the child bride in which the rights of women and children get articulated and legitimized, while the discourse of the patriarchal authorities are destabilized and rendered illegitimate. The subalternized female subject who is forced into early marriage so as to be rendered obscured and unnoticed becomes starred and noticed. She proves to have the potential to elicit the sympathy and support of the judge, human right organizations and lawyers and even press reporters who circulate her story on wider scale. This section shows how the patriarchal discourse, despite being deeply rooted in the Yemeni society, appears vulnerable and open to change and transformation through a discussion of a child-bride's resistance. The next section problematizes the possibility of preserving a mutual relation in the time of war through the story of requited love hindered by economic and political factors. That is, while this section discusses a kind of forced marriage motivated by mixed factors of honor, poverty and ignorance, the second section tackles love union between couple who challenge to be driven into separation because of the economic crisis and political hegemony that the war and its consequences have caused.

3.3. Quest for Dream in Wartime: Love as a Window to Social Cohesion in Amr Gamal's *ʿAsharat Ayyam qabl al-Zaffa* (10 Days before the Wedding, 2018)

Amr Gamal is a multitalented Yemeni artist who has worked in theater, television and cinema. The common thread in his theatrical, televisual and filmic work[46] lies in using art as an arena for sociopolitical critique and progressive transformation. For example, his play *Maʿak Nazil* (I Am Coming down with you, 2009), which was the first Yemeni play to be showcased in Europe, comically attacks the so-called "tourist marriage" that reduces woman to a mere commercial property and sex object. The play then reconstructs an alternative

[46] Amr Gamal has contributed to push the theater forward in Yemen by founding Khaleej Aden Theatre Troupe in 2005. Since then, he wrote and directed ten public theater plays, five television series, and a number of documentary films (See Tamjid Aziz Al-Kohali, "Interview with Amr Gamal: Theater in Wartime," *Al-Madaniya Magazine*, August 8, 2017, <https://almadaniyamag.com/2017/08/08/2017-8-7-amr-gamal-theater-in-wartime/>.

system that perceives marriage as a union of the spirit, rather than of the flesh.[47] Also, his play *Aud Thaqab* (The Matchstick, 2011) satirically criticizes woman's victimization and points to her potential to resist the familial and social structure of patriarchy.[48] Likewise, his debut feature under analysis, *10 days before the Wedding*, shows how the values of love and hope prevail over the power of division and despair brought about by the economic crisis and socio-political hegemony. In fact, the director represents a living model of resistance. In a context that is already bleeding besides having little interest in and limited memory of cinema, Gamal produced a film that has gained national and international acclaim and has been widely lauded by social media as well as by the audience.[49] In so doing, he opens prospects for further feature film productions and revives the hope of establishing cinema industry in Yemen.

The plot of the film revolves around ordinary, young Yemeni couple, Rasha and Ma'moon, whose marriage is put off by the war. Three years later, they decide to resume their wedding. However, ten days before the wedding, things dramatically get more complicated. They face various economic, social and psychological hurdles. The fiancé is compelled to leave his apartment to make room for his recently divorced aunt, along with her kids, whom he has built over her roof on the permission of his grandmother. Therefore, he wastes a large amount of his budget hunting for an ordinary house to store his stuff in a bombed-out city. In addition, he soon becomes jobless because his cyber cafe is seized for debt. Therefore, he faces dire financial problems. His wife's parent sees him unworthy to be married from their daughter since he becomes homeless and out of work. Further, the rich landlord of the house where they live for free puts them between two difficult options: either to get married from their daughter, Rasha, or to evict them from his house. These miserable circumstances affect the couple's psyche and exhaust their dream. Nevertheless, the power of love and hope overcomes the force of division and despair. The socio-political and economic circumstances have failed to conquer their love. They, at the end, perform their wedding ceremony among the rubble.

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[47] See Amr Gamal, dir., *Ma'ak Nazil* (I Am Coming with you), Al-Nabeal for Advertising and Artistic Production and German House, 2009. Play.

[48] See Amr Gamal, dir., *Aud Thaqab* (The Matchstick), Future Partners Foundation for Development, 2011. Play.

[49] Having been a member of the audience to whom the film, in conjunction with other films, was screened in Casablanca Arab Film Festival on 20 October, 2019, I observed that the audience has been captured by the director's integrated style between tragedy and comedy, pain and love, instant of vulnerability and moments of power when approaching his protagonists' identities. The film also received highly positive approval on the level of content as it was manifest in the comments and questions raised by the audience after the screening.

In the two previous analyzed films Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005) and Khan's *Factory Girls* (2014), love is respectively proved to be a bridge to a third space and an effective therapy for those who are swallowed by class and gender disparity. Likewise, the film under study *10 Days before the Wedding*, despite being set in a profoundly different context, envisions love as a site of interpersonal unification and fuel for reciprocal compassion. In the recently analyzed film *I am Nujoum Aged 10 and Divorced* by al-Salami, we see how early forced marriage turns home from a shelter of love and mercy to a space of conflict and oppression because the groom is socialized to perceive woman as sex object. On the contrary, the current film shows how love marriage turns home into a space of altruism and reciprocal enrichment because each one perceives the other as a human partner. Thus, such kind of union fuels the couple's spirits to face the multiple challenges that work to drive them towards split. This section tries to problematize how love can triumph over the traumatic consequences of war and the politics of division. Having been shaped and developed via non-linear trajectory, it is supposed to rethink the dogmatic conception of gender relations.

From the beginning of the film, love is represented as a unifying force that brings the couple as well as the marginalized together and helps them overcome the multidimensional consequences of the imposed war, which keep pushing them apart. The introductory scene explores the male protagonist's, Ma'moon, sacrifice for the sake of love. He is seen taking out his stuff from the new apartment he has already built in order to secure housing for his divorced aunt, Ansaf, and her kids. His love is represented as altruistic and compassionate in the sense that it is seen to be intermingled with humanitarian sense not only towards his lover, but also towards his divorced aunt and her kids. That is, he seems keen to maintain ties with his fiancée as well as with his relatives. Although his departure provokes a sharp discussion within the family between those who are fooling him for building on his aunt's roof and those who are blaming his aunt for keeping silent over the past two years, Ma'moon's voluntary act to leave the place for her is humanly appreciated by all of them. His compassionate love and benevolence is also celebrated and overvalued by the eyes of the camera—which is, of course, the eyes of the film director—in the sense that he is shot upstairs while his aunt is seen downstairs looking up at him. In so doing, his love seems to be committed to both social and marital justice. Thus, it would be fitting to argue that such love has undoubtedly the potential to withstand the economic and socio-political challenges.

The director contextualizes the hardships the couple have faced a few days before the wedding. The film opens with a tracking shot that follows the fiancé, Ma'moon, down the

streets of the city of Aden in which the traces of bombing are already apparent. This image is endowed with signifying depth through melancholic diegetic music superimposed to lament the sufferings and miserable life of the marginalized people to whom the protagonists belong. In an indication to the fiancé's resistance to be overcome by depression or frustration, he is shown ordering the driver, Rashid, to turn the song off as soon as he hears the verse "Oh, life, I lost my youth for you." [50] The scene integrates tragedy and comedy, pain and hope as well as melancholy and joy so as to convey that their love and hope beam from the depth of sufferings. In so doing, the director, from the beginning, celebrates the couple's affordable abilities to stand against the stressful pressures that impel them to cancel or, at least, re-delay their wedding.

The attempt to get affordable housing in a city afflicted by war and its aftermath represents one of the most serious problems that is supposed to hinder the couple's union. However, love serves as a driving force that pushes the couple forward to enduringly struggle to figure it out. It fuels their hope and frees them from surrendering to despair and frustration. In this respect, Ma'moon, in collaboration with his friends Walid and Rashid, embarks on a strenuous journey of house-hunting. During his relentless research, he moves forth and back across a yard where he stores his stuff on a daily rental basis. The landlord of the yard, Taqia, looks at it as if it were a three-star hotel. This is manifest in her recurrent expression: "This is a respectful yard, not a dumpster."[51] Although Ma'moon's friends resent her exploitative manner and try to quarrel with her in defiance of her greedy behavior, Ma'moon considers her behavior as a consequence of the war, which seems to have a significant impact on the dramatic shift of people's conditions and identity. The director implicitly conveys that the yard becomes a main source of living for the old woman. Driven by human consciousness, Ma'moon intervenes to resolve the conflict and altruistically responds to her demand. His love is symbolically oriented in the direction of spreading peace and reconciliation in the time of war. Thus, his altruistic reaction signifies that justice is implicit in love.

Apart from perceiving her behavior as an epitome of greed and exploitation or as a reflection of the exacerbating political and socioeconomic crisis of the state, the old landlord's act connotes that the status quo goes against fulfilling the fiancé's dream of marriage. In such exhausting journey of house-hunting, Ma'moon has lost a large proportion of the budget allocated for the wedding. More tragically, his stuff gets shot when he has come

[50] Amr Gamal, dir., *ʿAsharat Ayyam qabl az-Zaffa* (10 Days before the Wedding). RDENIUM, 2018.

[51] Ibid.

across a warehouse that turns out to be disputed between rival militias, which appear to be fiercely competing over control of properties. Thus, instead of being loaded by the burden of storing his stuff, he becomes overloaded by his stuff being spoiled by the rival factions. Nevertheless, he does not yield to such daunting challenges, but struggles to conquer them by love and hope.

If one reads the filmic text within its wider context, this would be interpreted, on the one hand, as an implicit criticism and denunciation of the foreign intervention and national despotism that fuel conflict and provoke a breakdown in the social fabric. It is as if the director is trying to say: by the means of love and reconciliation, you can establish a secure space and lives for all of you. On the other hand, it would be expressed as a triumph for the values of love that get along with peace, co-existence, human reconciliation, and culture of recognition. In reconciliation with this tendency, the director shows Ma'moon, with the support of his fiancée, carving points of light in the dark space and racing against time to get their wedding held on time, despite being embattled by accumulated crises. In so doing, the director clings to the principles of love as an effective strategy to bind people together on the personal, conjugal and political levels. That is, he approaches love not only as a mediator to resolve conflict, but also as a precondition to overcome the pressures of splitting and disintegration.

The image of love raised in the film is represented neither to be based on fantasies and illusions nor to be driven by materialistic motives at the expense of spiritual values. Rather, it is portrayed to be grounded on the empirical struggle for social justice. The couple are seen to be spiritually driven to resist the economic crisis and social hegemony that work to push them apart. Whereas the fiancé has been mainly preoccupied by confronting the successively economic challenges, his fiancée is seen so much committed to conquer the patriarchal ideology. The camera captures their struggle to save their love in a series of cut shots alternating between them. For example, after the tracking shot of Ma'moon hunting for an apartment to rent, the camera cuts to her fiancée's private space to pinpoint specific details about her socio-economic position and her role within her family.

Part of Rasha's character unfolds through her dialogue with her mother. In this dialogue, she is shown as an educated employee whose socioeconomic position does not depend on the head of her family. Her words reveal that she is financially supporting her parents rather than seeking their assistance. However, she does not go along with their materialistic orientation that values money over love and reputation over justice. The dialogue develops into a reflection of her rebellious act against her mother's inducements

intended to break off her engagement with the impoverished Ma'moon in favor for a rich man, Saleem, a landlord who has been putting a roof over their heads for three years in order to win over their heart and then wed their daughter. The dialogue takes the following course:

> RASHA'S MOTHER. I only want good things for you, idiot! Five years since you got engaged and it has been dragging on forever!
> RASHA. Mom, please be fair! It was not Ma'moon's fault! If not for the war, we would be raising our children now.
> RASHA'S MOTHER. You are still on the safe side, you silly head! You can find someone much better than your jinxed fiancé!
> RASHA. My wedding is in ten days, so you better stop this nonsense, Mom!
> RASHA'S MOTHER. You can still change your fate![52]

The dialogue appears to differentiate between love without justice and love with justice. Here, the mother definitely loves her daughter. But, her love seems to be devoid of justice because it is apparently driven by what Marx and Engels understand as "false consciousness."[53] That is, the mother is socialized to internalize the mainstream culture that overvalues marriage for money over that of love. Because the fiancé becomes impoverished by circumstances out of his control, she starts to perceive him as "jinxed." In her view, which is a reflection of the basic postulate rooted in the patriarchal culture, not only does woman's socio-economic position depend on her husband, but her fate is also determined and controlled by him. On the contrary, her daughter's love is framed within the struggle for justice, because she refutes her mother's suggestion on the ground of being detached from fairness. What Rasha says emphasizes that her love can never be oriented by the lust for money. Hence, she candidly addresses her mother to stop what she describes as "nonsense". In so doing, she clings to the principles of justice that do not seek to undo human ties in order to appeal for materialistic motives.

The question of altruistic love finds its resonance in Frantz Fanon's theorization. Although Fanon devotes much focus to the idea of counter-violence to make an end of the colonial violence and consequently pave the space for reciprocal recognition, he does not turn

[52] Ibid.

[53] In their discussion of ideology, Marx and Engels argue that individuals' ideas, values, religions and their corresponding forms of consciousness are determined and shaped by their historical and social relations with their material existence. See Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, pp. 46-450.

a blind eye to the possibility of love to bridge the gap in human relations. He candidly states: "Today I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavor to trace its imperfections, its perversions."[54] In Fanon's analysis of love between Capécia and André, he gets it out from the arena of authentic love because of its imperfection represented by the hierarchal relationship of subornation and domination, inferiority and superiority. For Fanon, "authentic love will remain unattainable before one has purged oneself of that feeling of inferiority."[55]

In opposition to Simone de Beauvoir's perception about love being a tool of woman's subordination, love in the film is represented as a driving force for her emancipation. Driven by love, the female protagonist, Rasha, proves that woman is not a mere body, but more importantly a soul whose freedom of choice and self-independence must be respected. The snap shots below signify how love tweaks her personality and makes her look beyond the patriarchal horizons.

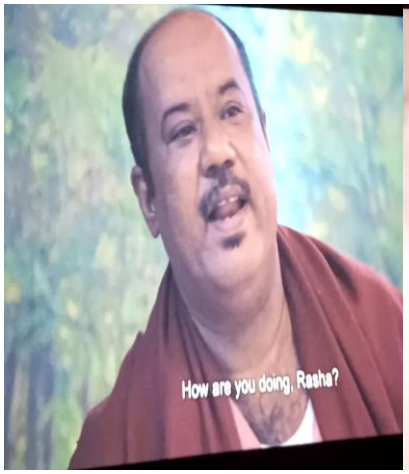

Figure 27. Saleem gazes upon Rasha's body (Gamal, *10 Days before the Wedding*, 2018).

Figure 28. Rasha returns the gaze with a sneer of contempt over her shoulder (Gamal, *10 Days before the Wedding*, 2018).

Figure 29. Rasha shifts Saleem's gaze from her body to her shoes (Gamal, *10 Days before the Wedding*, 2018).

In figure 27, Saleem's gaze, in correspondence with Laura Mulvey's viewpoint, constructs Rasha as a sex object. His gaze is riveted on her entire body, but it could not turn her passive. Instead of escaping the alien gaze as it is expected from her to do in the Yemeni society, she

[54] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 28.
[55] Ibid., p. 28.

challenges it, because she conceives herself as a spirit rather than as a flesh. She, in figure 28, turns her face back to him with a sneer of contempt and ridicule. She also meets his lascivious smile and greeting with sulky indignation. Incompatible with Mulvey's vision of woman's image being controlled by the male gaze, the female protagonist, in figure 29, proves capable not only of frustrating his gaze and disrupting his agency, but also of rendering him into a spectacle of mockery. She lowers the rich landlord's position by shifting his focus from her body to her shoes. The camera comes close to his face to register his disappointment. Her act is definitely intended to scorn those who perceive woman as a commercial object whose love can be solely gained by money.

It is most typically known that "the oppressor ignores the freedom and subjectivity of the other,"[56] and the case of the rich landlord, Saleem, is not an exception. He is seen persuading to incorporate the engaged woman into his world, using every means available. After he has realized that the financial inducements to her parents cannot end in his marrying her, because of having an autonomous identity, he resorts to direct persuasion. This time, he employs a lying device in order to secure a face-to-face conversation with her in private; that is, to have her ride with him in his car, he tells her that they have to take her mother to the hospital. But, such outrageous lying makes more harm than good to him since his credibility is soon undermined by her critical thinking, which forces him to admit to her that he is a liar. In a puzzled manner, he questions why she prefers an impoverished man who could not even get her a hut over a rich landlord who is ready to bring the world to her feet. Swayed by patriarchal considerations, he reduces a woman to a mere object to be induced by economic and material motives. For her, his persuasion is so absurd that it does not merit response; hence, she struggles to get out of his car rather than to discuss the unfairness of his ideas. Her resistance device, at this moment, is a slap on his face by which he is helplessly and hopelessly coerced to let her leave. In so doing, the director and the female protagonist overcome the stereotypes inherent within the patriarchal discourse about woman as weak, irrational, less loyal and docile. More importantly, they symbolically represent love to be not only a tool for woman's empowerment, but also a golden chain that steadfastly binds the conjugal, interpersonal and human relationships.

The director weights the value of love through complicating the hurdles that beset its path. In other words, the more challenges and frustrations the couple meet and overcome in the pursuit of their marriage, the more we discover the shining quality of love as an immune

[56] Thomas Martin, *Oppression and the Human Condition: An Introduction to Sartrean Existentialism* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p. 29.

against the attempts of disintegration. Within this frame, the film delineates the mechanisms of power intended to hinder their union, and the mechanics of resistance pursued to fulfill their dream. It shows that the fiancé becomes not only homeless, but also jobless. His net café is confiscated just six days before the wedding. His rival, Saleem, has plotted to drown him in debt so as to drain his only source of income, on the one hand, and belittle him in the eyes of his fiancée and her family, on the other hand. At the same time, Saleem raises his pressures on the fiancée's family to the highest pitch. In compatible with Gramsci's understanding of hegemony as a combination of consent and coercion, the oppressor, Saleem, uses carrot and stick to gratify his selfish desire. He, as a last resort, offers Rasha's parents two bitter options: either to let him marry their daughter on the ground of giving them material privileges, among them a new house furnished from top to bottom, or to evict them from his current house. This looks like an economic siege the superpowers impose on the marginalized states to disrupt their reciprocal coalition and then subject them to their hegemonic ideology.

The question of the consciousness is of paramount importance to challenge the hegemonic ideology. Unlike Spivak who homogenously argues that the "subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the élite,"[57] the film opposes this idea of generalization by giving two contrasting visions of the subaltern consciousness; it differentiates between the reactions of those who are mobilized by the elitist consciousness and those who are driven by their self-consciousness. For example, Rasha's family is seen influenced by the mainstream ideology that sees coalition with the capitalists as the best option to escape the consequences of economic crises. Thus, her parents and elder brother succumb to Saleem's hegemony, which is set up by a combination of inducements and threat. On the contrary, Rasha, along with her fiancé and her younger brother, appears to have her self-consciousness, which pushes her to determine that love marriage and reciprocal relationships are worth fighting for. In a rebellious act against the heavy pressures exercised upon her by her parents, she flees to a bombed-out apartment in defiance to be dealt with as a flesh. Her fiancé, although he has passed through moments of frustration, voices out his love from the center of materialistic world that tries to drain off human links in order to give primacy to material investments. Likewise, her younger brother who is stereotypically viewed as an idiot appears to have an intellectual power juxtaposed with high degree of wisdom. His relatives and friends, who serve as a mouthpiece for the mainstream ideology, try to mute his voice under the claim of having a rotten tongue. However, as the events of the

[57] Guha and Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 11.

film unfold, he proves to be wiser than anyone in the film. One reason is that his love is intersected with justice and guided by his own critical consciousness of what should be said and unsaid. Further, this marginalized voice is seen later to have a high degree of self-esteem; he adopts the option of getting out of Saleem's house and declares his responsibility to secure his family a house and living in favor of championing his sister's decision to marry out of love and not out of money.

At the end of the film, love marriage triumphs over the forced-arranged marriage. The couple succeed to make their dream come true. Among the rubbles, they meet and figure out what needs to be done in order to resolve their socio-economic problems like housing, wedding space, and livelihood. In the resolution scene, they are seen publicly holding their wedding among the rubbles in a signification that the war and its dire social consequences could not push them apart. In so doing, their love is represented as a signifier of consciousness in the sense that it emanates from the depth of sufferings and turns such sufferings into opportunity for fostering cohesion and happiness. The linking between the two couple might be argued to be a linking of two groups that have suffered marginalization and exploitation. As Luisa Passerini puts it, "love constitutes a unifying force that works in a similar way whether it is keeping a couple together or laying the foundation stones of a cohesive society."[58] The film celebrates the values of love in terms of its potential to literally protect the couple and metaphorically the societies from disintegration. Nevertheless, although love is viewed as a window to foster the solidarity of the oppressed, the director also looks at it as a space where the essentialist understanding of identity can be profoundly rethought. This means that as love without justice can lead to essentialism, dogmatism and even nativism, which Said, Fanon, Hall, and Shohat and Stam, among others abhor, love with justice can function as a space of unthinking essentialism in all its manifestations. Thus, the question to be lurking is: How can identity be rethought through the paradoxes of love?

Throughout the film, the couple's love is represented to be interlocked with a quest for social justice. Their love appears to be based on reciprocity and not on socio-economic incentives. In so doing, love seems to provide a greater range for identity expression. In the ethnocentric or capitalist society, identity is almost measured on discriminatory criteria like race and class or economic position. On the contrary, in the current discourse of subalternity, the idea of identification and solidarity is not based on class affiliation or socioeconomic position, but on the individual characteristics of the people involved. The director makes it

[58] Luisa Passerini, *Women and Men in Love: European Identities in the Twentieth* Century (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 1.

clear that economic identity is unstable and open to change and transformation. Consequently, the relations built on unstable ground would be actually disordered and unstable. The couple's economic status has undergone gradual decline due to the consequences of war and its aftermath. But, the decline of their economic status does not push them apart, but rather induces them to adapt themselves to the current circumstances. At first, they aspire to have their wedding be held in a luxurious wedding hall and to rent a house that fits with their rich economic potential. However, when they are hit by economic crisis, they undertake realignment with their current position; they reduce their demands and held their wedding in a public space, among the rubble. Moreover, in reconciliation with their current situation, they are convinced to rent a house up on the hill that the sun could not reach in order to fulfill their dream of union. Because of their consciousness of the fluidity of identity, the decline of their economic structure loses its grip on their spirit. Further, they do not accept their miserable position as fate, but as a temporary crisis whose effects would be overcome by hope, work and solidarity.

The portrayal of the socio-economic status as changeable conforms to Homi Bhabha's positioning of identity in in-between time and space. What has been previously seen as a mother land of the unprivileged people turns now to a graveyard for them. Aden, which was one day a city of peace and co-existence, becomes now occupied by different militias, which keep fighting against each other for no better reason than theft and plunder. The couple who are represented to have been first rich becomes now impoverished and homeless; they become displaced in their homeland. Although the film director represents the cause of the displaced and oppressed Adeni people as an outcome of a quasi-metaphysical injustice, his film actually keeps an allegorical criticism of what the Saudi-led Coalition—which is driven more by the lust for domination and exploitation than any desire for mutual relationship—has brought to Aden in particular and Yemen in general. However, just as the dominant politics of disintegration have failed on the marital level, they would likely fail on the socio-political level. The director's employment of the allegorical criticism of the status quo under the ruling of the Saudi-led Coalition reminds me of the Egyptian films during the colonial period in which criticism of the social ills implies an implicit condemnation of the colonizer.

Within the process of identity reconsideration, the film subverts the faulty premise that places the rich class at the center and reduces the impoverished groups to the margin. For instance, the rich landlord, Saleem, identifies himself in terms of economic might. But, such might turns to be so fragile to let him win over the heart of the woman he loves. All his continuous incentive and coercive attempts to persuade her end in ignominious failure. His

economic privileges neither gratify his self-interest nor undo his psychological frustrations and anxiety. By contrast, his ordinary and impoverished rival, Ma'moon, is placed in privileged position. His economic status could not reduce him in the eyes of his fiancée as well as his relatives, because he is represented to be imbued with human values such as love, altruism, compassion, loyalty and challenge that endow him with power and agency. This means, as Shohat and Stam clarify, that empowerment and disempowerment are relational terms; "people can occupy diverse positions, being empowered on one axis . . . but not on another."[59]

Unlike the feminist analyses that report "a direct relationship between the practice of love and the reproduction of patriarchal power,"[60] the film does not essentialize love relationship within the frame of domination and subordination. The fiancée is seen to have socio-economic independence, self-determination and strength. She is not driven by the desire to search for an out from her socio-economic situation, because her socio-economic position is depicted to be better than her fiancé's. In addition, she resists to be driven into an arranged marriage to a rich but unlovable man. When her parents try to inhibit their marriage for purely material reasons, she powerfully stands on the side of her impoverished fiancé. Likewise, his love is not egoistic, because he does not seek to enrich himself at the expense of her fiancée. Rather, it is altruistic in the sense that he tries to tolerate all the sufferings for the sake of reciprocating the feelings of her fiancée who, in turn, sacrifices three years of her age waiting him. Thus, their struggle for the love marriage is to be considered as an expression of their self-determination and championship for the just cause. More importantly, the film deconstructs the description of power on gender basis. It shows that the couple have passed through moments of weakness and even occasionally surrendered to the external constraints that try to hinder their union. In the moments of his weakness and vulnerability, he gets consolation and enrichment from her and vice versa. In so doing, the director approaches man-woman relationship as more relational and interdependent than dichotomous and dependent.

The notion of interdependence seems to basically characterize human relationships. But, the irony of interdependent notion of identity is that it has paradoxical consequences. That is, it can lead to asymmetrical relationship of subordination and domination as it is the case between Rasha's family and the rich landlord. The economic crisis compels Rasha's

[59] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 343.

[60] Wendy Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart: Gender, power and the delusions of love* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 5.

family to rely on the mercy of their oppressive funder. Simultaneously, the film shows that interdependence can alternatively establish a route to reciprocal relationship in which one gender cannot be privileged at the expense of the other. In this regard, the film shows, as it has been recently mentioned, that both couple are passing through moments of weakness and frustrations in which they are in need for reciprocal help and enrichment. For example, when Ma'moon becomes jobless, Rasha provides a suggestion to solve the problem by affording 60 percent of household budgeting. This means that love is conditioned in the film with reciprocity. It is summarized in the fiancé's precise statement: "If you still keep faith in me, I will fight for you till my last breath."[61] The film does not locate strength or weakness in a single individual. The notions of vulnerability and power are conditions that almost characterize the life-span of any human being like that of pain and joy. Thus, human relationships are represented to be relational and fluid rather than discrete and fixed.

To conclude, the advocacy of love relationships in the time of war would be expressed as a triumph for the values of love that get along with peace, co-existence, human reconciliation, and culture of recognition. The director symbolically represents love as a unifying force for the marginalized people against the politics of disintegration that keeps pushing them apart in order to have control over them. The image of love raised in the film is represented neither to be based on fantasies and illusions nor to be driven by materialistic motives at the expense of spiritual values. Rather, it is portrayed to be grounded on the empirical struggle for social justice. In opposition to the feminist perspective that essentializes love relationships within the frame of man's domination and woman's subordination, the film represents love as a space of reciprocal enrichment and as a means of fostering life-enhancing bonds through which identity is conceptualized as both independent and interdependent. This is expressed not only through couple's mutual championship, but also through the helping hands that stand at their sides during their hardship. However, in my view, the individuals' compassion towards each other does not function enough unless it is operated by resisting the dominant oppressive powers that exploit the national resources and invest at the expense of their suffering. In fact, social change would be more effective if the director questions the forces that are responsible for such pain and suffering instead of representing their cause as an outcome of a quasi-metaphysical injustice. That is to say, love would be more functional if the film investigated the underlying structure of injustice instead of deflecting attention away from confronting the larger system of oppression.

[61] Amr Gamal, dir., *ʿAsharat Ayyam qabl az-Zaffa* (10 Days before the Wedding). RDENIUM, 2018.

Conclusion

Like the Egyptian and Moroccan cinematic discourses that have been dealt with in the two previous chapters, the Yemeni filmic discourse proves to have a subversive power to resist or, at least, protest some kinds of oppression like Eurocentrism, national classism, sexism and ageism. Although the Arab cinematic discourses under analysis are almost divergent in manners and, to some extent, in themes, they are actually related in the orientation due to their common concern to speak up for the subaltern. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said argues that imperialism and resistance to it rest in the main on cultural basis because both operate on the information system, on knowledge. By analogy, the films under analysis appear to rest upon the rectification of the Eurocentric and national elitist historiographies, which bias in favor of one race, color, class, gender, age or religion over the other, as an imperative device to change power relations within a society. In other words, the cultural resistance in the Yemeni films under analysis lies in crafting counter-discursive knowledge outside the Eurocentric and national mainstream discourses. In so doing, these films open the space not merely for historiographical rectification but importantly for building bridges between people of different classes and cultures as well as for the articulation and legitimization of the rights of the lower classes, among them women and children.

The film *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005) by Ben Hirsi foregrounds for the disruption of essentialism in all its forms by setting the ground for conceptualizing the different Other as a human irrespective of his racial, class, gender or religious background; that is, it pushes people from identification on an essentialist ground to that based on liberal human consciousness. It is on this account that the film director manages to challenge the stereotypic, demeaning representation of Arabs and Muslims, particularly of woman. The Oriental space, Sana'a, is depicted as culturally rich and abundant and its local people as civilized, sociable and friendly rather than as barbaric and hostile, with the intention to hurt Westerners. Rudyard Kipling's mental blockade of the commonalities and compatibility between the East and West, stressed in his controversial poem entitled "The Ballad of East and West,"[62] is replaced in the film by Rabindranath Tagore's assertive response that "[t]he

[62] Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West (1889)," *Poetry Lovers' Page*. <https://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/ballad_of_east_and_west.html>.

twain shall meet in amity, peace, and mutual understanding."[63] Yemeni women are also represented as visible and self-confident and as having a decision, particularly at the household. Further, the lower class woman, according to the mainstream classification, is depicted to be richer in beauty, attractiveness, friendliness, and credibility than the upper-class woman. In so doing, the film opens the space not only for historiographical rectification of the Eurocentric and nationally elitist discourses but also for building bridges between people of different classes and cultures, as it is represented respectively by the mutual love between the upper-class Tariq and the lower-class Inas and between the Yemeni Muslim woman Bilqis and the Italian Christian photographer Federico. Their love stories are presented in the film as a metaphorical resistance against the practices of hegemonic matchmaking.

While the first section proves that human relations defy to be bound by geographical, racial, religious or any other constructed border, the second section shows that the ideology of socialization or "interpellation", to use Althusser's terminology cannot function in the same way with all individuals. Al-Salami's film *I Am Nujoum Aged 10 and Divorced* shows that the patriarchal politics of socialization and domination could not render the female child submissive and obedient. Rather, after she has experienced the practices of oppression, she turns into a vehement rebel against the patriarchal authority, deconstructing its legitimacy on the conjugal, familial, religious, tribal and legal levels, and hence reconstructing an alternative legitimacy in which woman's and child's rights have to be considered. The film director celebrates the heroism of the female protagonist for paving the way for reform in the family law in a country lacking legislation pertaining to the minimum age of marriage by her potential to elicit wider sympathy and support for her just cause.

While these two films go against the hegemonic relationships and set up the space for counter-hegemonic alternatives, which are not in any way disadvantageous to lower classes, particularly women and children, the third film *10 Days before the Wedding* by Gamal depicts requited love and reciprocal relationships as being worth fighting for. In the Egyptian film *Factory Girls* by Khan and the Yemeni film *A New Day in Old Sana'a* by Ben Hirsi, love is respectively represented as an effective therapy for those who are swallowed by class and gender disparity and as a bridge to a third space in which the boundaries between the seemingly hierarchal categories would be blurred. Likewise, Amr Gamal's film envisions

[63] Cited in Kwame Gyekye, *Beyond Cultures: Perceiving a Common Humanity: Ghanian Philosophical Studies, III* (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2004), p. 140.

love as a unifying force against the pressures that literally and metaphorically keep pushing the marginalized couple towards split and their country towards disintegration. In opposition to the feminist perspective that essentializes love relationships within the frame of man's domination and woman's subordination, the film represents love as a space of mutual enrichment through which man-woman relationship is shown to be more relational and interdependent than dichotomous and dependent. Furthermore, in agreement with the sociological perspective, love is envisioned in the film as a powerful means for spreading peace and reconciliation in the time of war and as an immune against social disintegration. The film director weights the value of love through complicating the hurdles that couple overcome, with a climax featuring their triumph from within the rubble. However, it would function better and even stronger if the film director dared to advocate the local resistance against the dominant forces that keep exacerbating the pain and suffering of the couple, and symbolically Yemeni people, instead of representing their cause as an outcome of a quasi-metaphysical injustice.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the representation of cultural resistance in Arab cinema through in-depth analysis of nine contemporary feature films chosen from Egypt, Morocco and Yemen on the basis of their relevance to the marginalized and alienated people's struggle for freedom and social and human justice. It has endeavored to fill what has been almost overlooked or inadequately treated in the existing literature on Arab cinema by providing a more inclusive analysis that considers different and multiple discourses and images of resistance. The complex and ambivalent nature of this representation has been brought forth by employing interdisciplinary approach that merges film studies with postcolonial theories, along with the occasional use of the cultural studies style to make connections in intertextual terms. Without eclectically making use of such varied theoretical tools, it would be hard to account for the various meanings and images that could remain hidden if one relies exclusively on a single approach. Moreover, this study has neither been limited to a single aspect of resistance like that of decolonization or woman's empowerment nor to the analysis of the film's narrative at the expense of film's language. Rather, it has employed form and content analysis to examine how the contemporary Arab cinematic discourses have managed not only to decolonize mind from the suffocating embrace of Euro-Americentrism, but also to liberate it from falling prey to the facile or orthodox nationalism, religious essentialism, authoritarian parenting and social hierarchy in its various manifestations.

The major finding to be taken from this study is that the various forms of resistance embodied in the films under analysis have been shown to work, although with different potentials, in favor of articulating the politics of mutual recognition and multiculturalism. However, far from univocity and oversimplification, the power struggle has been seen to be complex, slippery, transformational and relational whereby the norms and interests of the dominant powers can be partly and momentarily maintained but neither completely nor eternally. My analysis of the films has shown the inability of the dominant powers neither to curtail the cultural flow of the opposite discourses nor to render others submissive and defenseless, because the latter find innumerable ways by which they address and undermine the powers that have oppressed them. In some cases, dominant powers attempt to render the subalterns obscured, absent and invisible have been shown to make them more starred, present and visible. On this basis, the politics of domination and exclusion have been approached in the Arab films under question as more a predicament than an advantage because they would actually complicate

human relationships more than they secure the interests and privileges of any of the parties. Nevertheless, understanding the complex and ambivalent nature of resistance in Arab cinema and the means by which it is articulated would only be accounted for by delving into what has been covered in the theoretical and analytical parts.

The conceptualization of cinema has been dealt with, in the theoretical part, in relation to not only its artistic features and ideological functions, but also to its discursive potential to provide counter-hegemonic discourses. The notion of resistance is even implied in the delineation of the historical genesis of cinema, which disrupts the ethnocentric perspective of granting unquestionable exclusive privileges with regard to the emergence of the technique and art of cinematography to certain individuals or a particular community. Instead, my delineation of cinema has offered a counter-ethnocentric story that recognizes the interdependent and multiple efforts in the process of cinema's arrival, taking into considerations the historical, social and cultural contexts in which previous arts had played in the emergence of cinema. Therefore, cinema is caught up in a multimodal context in which photography, painting, theatre and literature are merged in order to reinforce the bond between the filmic text and spectator. The hybridity of the film style structurally alters the notions of purity and absolute dichotomy and renders them less functional by highlighting the aesthetic power of the artistic diversity of cinema, which works as an important factor for cultural enrichment. This applies, of course, to the ideological functioning of the cinematic medium whose interdisciplinary discourse can be used to resist the pure and monolithic vision of identity and cultural hegemony at large.

Positioning Arab cinema vis-à-vis the colonial context in which the colonial authorities have attempted to dominate and repress the cultural life of the colonized peoples would emphasize the political force of the means of cultural productions in general and audio-visual arts in particular in the process of decolonization. If the demeaning and distorting images forged about Arab in Hollywood cinema have been seen, in Shaheen's view, as destructive as the physical force of gun, the subversive role Arab cinema is entrusted to play in the deconstruction of such hegemonic discourse cannot be underestimated. Because of the power of the word in the national liberation and in the development of the sense of national identity, the colonial powers tried to enforce its domination on the cultural realm, including cinema, with the help of legal restrictions. This unveils that the colonial and imperial cultures seem so vulnerable and fragile to stand up in front of the Other culture. In so doing, the space of resistance is implicitly articulated, here, through alerting us to the colonizer's internal fear and anxiety from the cultural flow of counter-imperialist discourse.

However, the strict restrictions imposed on the Arab cinematic productions did not equally function everywhere in the Arab World. Unlike Morocco and Yemen, which appeared to not produce even a single feature film by native filmmakers before independence, Egypt, for example, has managed to establish a national film industry. Although Egyptian films were not overtly political, they had an aspect of resistance in the sense that they wrested back the colonial monopoly over film productions and helped contribute to the pan-Arab sense of identity due to their popularity in the Arab world. Further, some films kept, to some extent, an allegorical criticism of social problems like unemployment, employees' struggle for their rights and an internal structure of capitalistic system, which implies an implicit condemnation of the colonial project and its consequence on the native lives.

The postcolonial context has really marked a turning point in the evolution of the national cinematic discourses where the questions of decolonization and national identity have been powerfully advocated. In other words, the decolonization of territories goes side by side with the decolonization of culture. Despite the fact that the advocacy of national questions plays an important role in laying bare the real face of colonialism and in resisting its policies of 'divide and rule,' it has almost denied or belittled the roles of the marginalized, gendered subaltern, and migrant's exile in the process of national liberation. Therefore, Arab cinema has been increasingly revolutionized by various filmmakers who have dealt with national issues not simply from the point of view of the national elites, but more importantly from perspective of the marginalized and silenced individuals and groups so as to recognize their potential roles both in the decolonization struggle and in the process of social reforms as a whole.

The insights drawn from postcolonial theories have cultivated the lines of understanding and analyzing the resources and spaces of resistance raised in the films in their discursively complex and ambivalent structures. However, this does not necessarily mean that such theories have not epistemological limits or they cannot be challenged by Arab films. For instance, Frantz Fanon has significantly drawn our attention to the racial, exploitative and violent structure of colonialism from a point of view of a psychologist and anti-colonial theorist who has really lived the experience. In such context, Fanon argues that the creation of mutual recognition cannot be achieved through Hegel's master-slave dialectic in which the slave's labor culminates in his liberation. He goes against approaching the struggle for liberation from philosophical ivory towers where recognition is portrayed to be easily granted by the master. Building on his daily encounters with the French colonial racial structure and his clinical observation, as a psychiatrist, of tortured and shattered victims, Fanon comes to the conclusion that colonial psychopathology is based on violence and can be effectively cured only by counter-violence; he endorses

revolutionary violence as necessary and legitimate in a context where all other options have proven futile to make an end of the colonial oppression. Further, counter-violence, for him, has psychological and social values for the oppressed in the sense that it helps cleanse the native of his inferiority complex and unite the masses under their common cause. Fanon's discernment of the nature of colonialism and the effective means by which it could be addressed unfolds clearly in the analysis of the Moroccan anti-colonial film *'Atach* (Thirst, 2000) by Chraibi, as it is summarized below.

Although Fanon emphasizes the effectiveness of counter-violence in the anti-colonial struggle, he does not turn a blind eye to the significant values of reclaiming the national culture and past or buried history, which is actually stressed by Edward Said and Stuart Hall as significant resources of resistance and identity, so as to provide counter-telling of the pathological representations typical of the colonial and neocolonial historiography. It is through the means of bringing back the buried or distorted history that Chahine, in his film *Alexandria . . . New York,* has been capable to refute the historical stereotypes forged about Arab and their native culture by the imperialist discourse. In spite of Fanon's prominent contribution to removing the muzzle that has silenced or deformed the historical agency of the black man, he has been criticized by many critics for neglecting gender issues and for his essentialist conceptualization of the peasantry as the only authentic revolutionary component, as it has been explained in Chapter 2. The Moroccan film *Thirst* also portrays the anti-colonial resistance as more plural and diverse than Fanon has imagined where men, women, national elitists and peasants are seen participating, although in varying degrees, in the struggle for independence. This film in addition does not homogenize the French; it depicts the lieutenant's wife as sympathetic and even friendly towards the natives in contrast to her husband. Further, unlike Fanon's claim which says that if events go one step further, "the leader of the nationalist party keeps his distance with regard to that violence."[1] In this film, the leader of the nationalist party is seen appreciating the peasant's rebellious act, coordinating with him and later adopting his strategy.

Unlike Fanon who focuses on the social and revolutionary struggle, Said puts much faith in the cultural and intellectual battle to decolonize Western scholarship and historiography of the Orient, particularly of the Arab world, and to open the academy to non-Western resources and forms of knowledge; he is much concerned not only with laying bare how Western scholarship has constructed the Orient in ways that help legitimize and maintain control over it, but also with

[1] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.62.

the "process of overturning the dominant ways of seeing the world,"[2] to use the phrase of John McLeod. Therefore, his groundbreaking insight inspires critics to study literary, journalistic and, by extension, cinematic texts from postcolonial point of view so as to help them adequately understand and analyze how the Western dominant discourse is culturally and ideologically constructed, "with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles,"[3] to justify and sustain the imperial enterprise and how such hegemonic discourse is also rewritten in subversive ways from the punctuations of resistance.

Advancing secular criticism, both Fanon and Said do not frame resistance within the circle of seeking independence, because they perceive it as an unending process for liberation of the oppressed and for the articulation of the minoritized voices. On this basis, they go beyond national consciousness to set forth a more liberating framework involving a transformation to social and human consciousness. That is why their theories of resistance reverberate in all films under study. However, Said's work, as it is previously shown in the case of Fanon, cannot go without criticism. His account is thought to have suffered blind spots of the heterogeneity, ambivalence and contradictions of the Western scholarship. His seemingly homogenization of Western knowledge about the Orient is discursively challenged by Chahine's film *Alexandria . . . New York* in which we see some of the American scholars to have a powerful stance against Eurocentrism. They are also seen cheerfully celebrating the scientific and artistic supremacy of the Arab artist and recognizing the richness and coexistence characterizing Arab culture and history. However, the film's ambivalent attitude of the American individuals' position does not negate that the imperialist and racist impulse is seen to dominate and rule the relations of the American system with the Arab world. Likewise, his positioning of Orientalism within the frame of Western epistemology has been complicated by Arab films, which show that Arabs can be Orientalists and can affirm their identity through the same politics of Othering used by Western Orientalism.[4] More importantly, Said appears to neglect other forms of oppression like gender, sex and age hierarchy.

The Subaltern Studies have expanded the scope of resistance and bridged the gaps that Said, along with nationalists and Marxists, has left out by creating a more inclusive paradigm of knowledge, which respond to diverse forms of subalternity. The nationalist ideology, for

[2] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 22.

[3] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 2.

[4] See, for example, Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East*, pp. 165-173.

example, represents the indigenous elite as a backbone of the decolonization process, while silencing or at best, relegating the roles ordinary individuals and minority groups have played to secondary importance. Marxists have actually provided solid critiques of imperialism, capitalism and totalitarianism, but they turn a blind eye to "the hold of "backward" ideologies of caste and religion."[5] In the work of the subaltern studies critics, the subaltern (hi)stories are actually given an important position and used as a revisionist tool to contest not only colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist historiography, but also the power relation that is fought out along the lines of caste, kin, occupation, office, religion and age so as to liberate minds from being entrapped by dominant ideologies. As the films under study show, the rewriting of history from below does challenge the univocity and oversimplifying mode of historicizing through opening the space for an interaction with myriad voices that have been eclipsed in the dominant historiography on the assumption of having lacked sufficient consciousness and hence capability to represent their own history.

On this basis, central to the case of retrieving the subaltern speech is the question of subaltern consciousness, because "consciousness is the ground that makes all disclosure possible."[6] The problem, here, is that the notion of the subaltern consciousness has been heavily debated in the work of the Subaltern Studies. For instance, Spivak's work—which directly echoes that of Gramsci in terms of his argument of the inability of the subaltern to have an autonomous consciousness as a group—has acted to empty the gendered subaltern of her potential to develop progressive consciousness on her own and hence of her ability to voice her agency. By contrast, Guha, in conjunction with Chatterjee, O'Hanlon and Visweswaran, emphasizes that the making of absence into presence is essentially effectuated by the recuperation of the subaltern as a conscious human subject rather than as a blind follower of any elite. However, the films under study have clarified that the subalterns' consciousness, like identity, is more complex, relational, heterogeneous, and fragmented than static, linear, homogenous and monolithic. It is constituted and changed through the experiences of oppression, struggle, and historical and cultural encounters.

The discursive analyses of the contestation between the mechanisms of power and the dialectics of resistance in the nine contemporary Arab films under study have shown the complex route that the disempowered carve to empower their positions and voice their accounts. The idea of resistance articulated in these films works in two interrelated processes. On the one hand, these films have provided important exposures and critiques of various forms of oppressive

[5] Gyan Prakash. "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," pp. 1475-1490.
[6] Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, p. 10.

discourses and practices such as colonialism, neocolonialism, Eurocentrism, national and religious totalitarianism and the discriminatory practices that are run along the lines of race, gender, class, age, office, religion or language. On the other hand, they have shown the potential of the dominated people to recover their repressed histories and strengthen their agency in various ways.

The forms of resistance differ certainly according the nature of the hegemonic discourses and the experiences of oppression to which the subjugated and alienated people respond as well as according to the context in which they find themselves in. But, what has to be mentioned is that the dominant attempts to inhibit the counter-hegemonic modes of production or to render the subalternized people speechless and submissive have actually failed, if not brought about reverse results, simply because the latter are shown to have the potential to write as well as fight back. In so doing, the film directors, at least in their films under study, appear to view the culture of mutual recognition and the politics of multiculturalism as inevitable, given that the power struggle is proved to be slippery, multidimensional, and transformational rather than straightforward, unidimensional and static. Therefore, unearthing and understanding the complex dialectic of power relation in contemporary Arab cinema and how it is relevant to the overall argument require a close discussion of the basic aspects and characteristics of resistance in each film and its relation to the other films, which have been selected to be hopefully representative of the contemporary Arab cinematic responses to a wide range of oppression issues.

Through case analysis of three films, the first chapter of the analytical part has loomed largely on the Egyptian cinematic responses to the American imperialism, Eurocentrism and the problems of chaos and corruption in its nationalist, religious, educational, moral and familial interrelated dimensions, besides its treatment of issues related to class and gender hierarchy. In his semi-autobiographical film *Alexandria . . . New York*, Chahine goes back and forth to chart his conflicting relationship with America as a metropolitan Arab figure whose upbringing and education have been open to the celebration of cultural diversities. Taking the audience on a journey backward, Chahine admits that America has so far been confusing to him and, symbolically, to the Arab world. He seems to have perceived America as more alluring than threatening. This is mainly symbolized through a story of requited love between Yahya/Chahine, a low-middle class Egyptian boy, and Ginger, an American female colleague from an aristocratic family. However, after a long journey of identification, Yahya was impelled to rethink the oversimplified perception he had formed about America several years earlier. He begins to trace the American position towards the Arab world in a much more pronounced manner, exposing the threat posed by its hegemonic policies on the micro and macro levels—ranging from its

withdrawal of funding for the showpiece project of the High Dam to its unlimited support to the Israeli occupation. On this basis, he now portrays America as more threatening than alluring because of becoming increasingly and massively swallowed by racism and driven by imperialist and capitalist ideology. Through the technique of flashbacks and flashforwards, he presents a lot of the racist and Eurocentric positions he has encountered in the United States whose climax is represented by his American son's, as a mouthpiece of the American system, absolute refusal to accept him as a father despite all overtures of reconciliation and despite of his father's deep affection for him, simply because he is an Arab.

Having harshly attacked American racism and Eurocentrism, Chahine does not endorse American-phobic attitude towards American individuals, because he differentiates between America as a society, which is seen virtually as heterogeneous and multicultural, and America as a historically oppressive and racist system towards its external and internal Other. He shows how American-centrism, as a mode of thought, legitimizes link to the West while belittling the link to the Arab world. Although the phenotypic features of Yahya/Chahine and his American son Alexander seem to be quite similar—as the medium and close-up flashback shots show and as Alexander's mother confirms—and so do their artistic interests, they enormously differ in terms of their political and cultural perception of the world. Unlike the cosmopolitan Yahya who celebrates cultural diversity and understands cultural differences as a space for mutual enrichment, Alexander perceives cultural differences as an impediment to reciprocal relationship, simply because he views the world from privileged Americentric perspective in which power, knowledge, beauty and supremacy are thought to be intrinsically centered in the West. More strikingly, Alexander perceives civilization as accumulation of military power by which America could enforce its hegemony over all countries and regions abroad and the minorities at home. It is on this account that the director approaches the contemporary American position towards the Arab world as more threatening and sharper than before. That is, in spite of the commonalities that are entrusted to bring the Arab-American relationship to the point of mutuality, the American system, represented in the film by its mouthpiece Alexander, turns a blind eye to all overtures of reconciliation and mutual relations. In response to such radical version of the American hegemony, Chahine holds the view that the one-sided recognition can never work, and hence cutting off such unequal, one-sided relationship with the historically American oppressive system appears to be the only effective option.

To elicit the spectator's support for the struggle against Eurocentrism whereby people warrant respect on essentialist grounds, the cosmopolitan boy, Yahya/Chahine, who comes from a place depicted by Western media as a space of unfamiliarity, threat or backwardness proves,

however, to be more familiar, open, supreme and multitalented than his American colleagues on the cultural, artistic and scientific levels. Further, the Oriental space, which is depicted in the Western media as a space of confinement and homogeneity, turns out to be in the film as a space of artistic and intellectual inspiration, openness and cultural co-existence among different ethnicities and religions. However, having brought to play the glorious history of Egypt and, symbolically, the Arab world that has been so far distorted by colonial discourse does never mean that Chahine looks at Egypt or the Arab world through ethnocentric lenses. In his final film under analysis, *Hiya Fawda* (Chaos, 2007), Chahine examines the conflict between the mechanisms of corruption and chaos and the dialectics of social consciousness in the contemporary Egyptian context.

In this film, Chahine unveils the predicaments of totalitarian nationalism in terms of its failure to adhere to the dictated human values and to meet the aspirations of the masses. Comparing the practices of the militant nationalists to those of the French colonizers in the Moroccan film '*Atach* affirms the argument, stressed by Fanon, that nationalism can turn into another face of colonialism and hence a source of chaos and corruption unless it is governed by encompassing social and human policies. The film gives many examples of how the pseudo-democracy adopted by the authoritarian nationalist regimes might bring to people a darker chapter of dictatorship, corruption, and chaos. This is represented not only through the police violation of civil liberties, but also through other chaotic and corrupt practices. For instance, the ruling Nationalist Party is seen, in the stage-management of the election campaign, intruding into educational affairs, turning schools from a space for advancing knowledge into a politically propagandistic platform. In a similar vein, the Muslim Brotherhood Party is seen opting for a more overt electoral mobilization on religious grounds whereby the Quranic verses are employed outside its context for the sake of political gains. This, in fact, gets the politically-oriented national and religious elitists to embroil in chaos and perhaps hypocrisy. In this respect, chaos and corruption are represented to be inculcated and maintained not only through the help of police and army, but also through the dissemination of ignorance. As a result, the film locates the voices of resistance in those who keep questioning what is said or promoted, because they can hardly ever be led by narrow-minded ideologies, be they packaged in secular or religious milieus.

The film does not merely provide critique of the autocratic nationalism and religious fanaticism, but importantly explores how the exertion of power can be challenged in various ways. In this respect, the senior police officer Hatem, who perceives himself as an autocrat of Egypt, appears helpless to have absolute control upon the political demonstrators even in the

prison cells; he could not exert his control on their gestures, gazes and voices, simply because he has failed to deactivate their counter-hegemonic consciousness. In an emphasis of the relational nature of power, the film shows that the officer who dreams to take absolute control upon others becomes in many occasions out of control of his emotions. As further evidence of the idea of power as relational, this authoritarian officer is shown to have failed to impose his love, and symbolically his domination, even upon his neighbor's daughter Nour in spite of his tirelessly persuasive and threatening attempts. On the contrary, his resort to force through raping her, which symbolizes the forcible rape of authority, proves to be the last straw that breaks his back. In a similar vein, the Muslim brothers' exploitation of religion for political gains is represented as a short way to their defeat, because their credibility is seen to have been profoundly undermined from the first encounter.

Chahine also digs deep into the root of the dilemma of the chaos and corruption. However, the more he investigates it, the more complex and multidimensional it appears. He, indeed, leaps over the heads of the political parties, educational system, religious ideologies, and familial kinship, laying bare how their distance from social and human consciousness have significantly led to the emergence and development of the chaos and corruption. This emphasizes the socio-political significance of Fanon and Said's theorization of social consciousness as a core step in the process of liberation. Unlike Spivak who silences the subalterns' socio-political agency and strips them of their autonomous consciousness, the film proves the potential of the subalternized people to recuperate their autonomous consciousness and to bring their fragmented voices together around their common cause. In so doing, the students' repressed demonstrations in the beginning of the film turns into a massive revolution at the end of the film effectuated by a multitude of resistant voices, with women heading at the forefront as an emphasis on their vital role in the process of social and political reforms.

Like Chahine's *Chaos*, Khan's film *fatat al-Masna'* (Factory Girl) is sited within the corpus of socio-political and cultural concerns in the contemporary Egyptian society. But, unlike Chahine who places much focus on problematizing the nationalist totalitarianism and religious fanaticism in their relations to the deteriorating political, socioeconomic, educational and moral conditions, Khan makes lower-working women's pursuit for social justice a central focus of his film. He discusses class differences in relation to man-woman relationship through a story of unrequited love between a lower-class factory girl Hiyam and a middle-class factory supervisor Salah. Although the class differences between them seem to be little, the director depicts such differences at their most apparent positions through his engagement in small details so as to signify how class gap becomes large and much more marked when it is intersected with gender

relations. Nonetheless, the working class women are seen disempowered on the material axis, but not on the spiritual and psychological ones; their socially lower-constructed position could not turn them fragile or render them depressive or pessimistic. This signifies, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue, that the issues of empowerment and disempowerment are relational, because people can occupy diverse positions. The complexity of power relation is also highlighted through the feminization of the workspace and home space in an indication of the incapability of patriarchal system to exclude women from labor market or turn them invisible, because they form an important constituent of the workforce as well as society.

The film director carries out harsh attack on those who are uncritically swept by norms of class and gender-based preference. He unloads the handsome middle class Salah from his worth by portraying him as oscillated and submissive to hierarchal traditions, which get him more prone to suffer from psychological and social alienation. By contrast, he reloads the lower working woman Hiyam with positive values and worth in terms of showing her capable to emit the beam of love and hope from the depth of suffering and exploitation. The camera, throughout the film, shows her surpassing him in every respect, spiritual, moral and human. Unlike the feminist perception of love as the pivot of women's oppression on the assumption of being a source of emotional vulnerability, the film goes in line with the sociologists' viewpoint seeing it to be a means of liberation from psychological and social complexes and thereby a driving force for human consensus. Although love can be used, as feminists argue, as an ideological device to perpetuate women's subordination in the case of woman's socioeconomic dependency on her spouse, this film situates it in an alternative frame. In contrast to the discourse of love in Chahine's film *Chaos*, which is governed by the impulse of domination and control and pursued through oppressive routes, love in this film is operated by the desire for reciprocity and pursued through democratic channels. For the film director, human bonds are actually important. But, they have to be built on fair negotiation, rather than on domination and hegemony.

Although the director admits the challenges of change in the oppressive contexts, he rests his faith in the triple philosophy of love, hope and work in relation to other means of resistance, which actually differ to fit the context within which the gendered subalterns find themselves in as detailed in the analytical part. Through such complex formula of resistance, Hiyam manages to not only put the male and female patriarchs in a moral dilemma but also to triumph for the values of emotional freedom, verification and human consciousness over the impulses of selfishness or hatred, emotional repression, fabrication and narrow class and gender consciousness. The factory girl's resistance against the capitalist patriarchy is backgrounded by a mass demonstration reverberating revolutionary mottoes, among them "a woman's voice is a

revolution, and not a shame" in a signification for the vital role women are entrusted to play in the struggle for social justice.

The Egyptian films have synthesized the resistance to the Americocentrism, the third world's despotism and ethnocentrism with the struggle against the capitalist patriarchy. Close to that, the Moroccan films give counter-telling of the colonial, national and patriarchal historiographies by bringing the voices of the colonized, the political detainees, and revolutionary woman into the spot. In so doing, all of them intersect in the aspects of rethinking the hegemonic discourses through giving much space to the voices that have been oppressed, distorted and excluded by dominant discourses and practices. Besides, all of them actually employ, although in different degrees, various audio-visual cinematic techniques and narrative devices to communicate the operation of resistance in relation to power. However, Moroccan films seem to be more inclined towards using poetic style than their Egyptian and Yemeni counterparts.

In Chahine's *Alexandria . . . New York*, the Eurocentric construction of the United States as a destination of equality, liberty and upper mobility and the essentialist reduction of the Arab world to an entity of either backwardness or threat are profoundly refuted and challenged by a counter-hegemonic and counter-stereotypic discourse. In a similar vein, the Moroccan film *Thirst* by Chraibi refutes the colonial claims of bringing civilizing mission to the colonies. It features the excessive racism, drought, starvation and injustice that the French colonizer has brought to Morocco so as to endorse the natives' revolutionary violence as a necessary and legitimate response to the colonial practices. For example, it opens with a melancholic long take tracking the drought and hunger brought by the French colonizers to a village of southern Morocco, Tinejdad. The camera's mapping of the deserted village is accompanied by a sad voiceover conveyed in a poetic style to give psychological depth to the native sufferings. To highlight the exploitative nature of colonialism, the camera switches back to a deep depth of field to capture the thirst of land, animals and populations for water. The struggle for water symbolically stands for the fight for existence and survival.

To further subvert the colonial essentialist image of the Moroccan and, by extension, Arab natives as innately violent and fanatic, the film displays a special love story between two Moroccan laborers for the French colonizer whose labor does not set them free so as to symbolize that the colonized people are thirsty for freedom and independence as much as they are thirsty for love and life. More importantly, the anti-colonial struggle is not exclusively represented as a conflict between two blocs: the nationalists and colonialists. Rather, the film tries to restore the agency of the subaltern individuals and groups, who work outside the frame of

the national movement, and celebrate their effective participation in the anti-colonial resistance. Comparing the subaltern voices in this film to that of the Egyptian film *Chaos* by Chahine, we find out that the common thread between their resistance is that they are awaken by the experiences of oppression rather than being mobilized by the elite consciousness. In this film, the recovery of the colonized subaltern subjects' memory functions as resistance to the Western historicizing of colonialism as well as to the national elitist and other essentialist narration of history. The film, indeed, emphasizes the need to vaccinate nationalism with social and human consciousness in order to be more inclusive, efficient and empowering of the marginalized and, to add, migrant's exile.

The next film, *Dhakirah Mu'taqalah* (Memory in Detention, 2004) goes partly in line with the current film in terms of its warning against turning nationalism into a form of authoritarian system. Like Chraibi's *Thirst*, Ferhati's *Memory in Detention* represents the political detainees' memory as a powerful resistance to the attempts of oblivion. Both of them emphasize the importance of retelling the past traumas from a perspective that runs counter to the dominant narrations of history in order to not reproduce such oppressive practices in the present and even in the future. The film attempts to retrieve the historical archives of the so-called "lead years" through the voice a political prisoner, Mokhtar Alyouni, who has been violently removed from the arena of political struggle when he was a teenager. That is, it tries to revisit the Moroccan past by reflecting the voices that have been effaced by violence and oppression.

The phenomenon of political imprisonment is a recurrent theme in Arab cinema. In the above-analyzed film *Chaos*, the Egyptian director Chahine throws light on the problem of political incarceration in the Egyptian context. However, Unlike the Moroccan film under analysis in which such problem is resolved through the channels of reconciliation, the demands for the release of the political detainees in the Egyptian context is effectuated only by the protestors storming the police station in violent riot. Although the two films seem to have a similar orientation represented by transforming national consciousness to that of human consciousness, they differ, to some extent, in terms of methodology. The scenes of violence, flogging, and torture that overwhelm Chahine's film *Chaos* are replaced in Ferhati's *Memory in Detention* with a poetic style that awakens us to contemplation and reconsideration. That is, the police's brutality against the political prisoners is given special focus as well as large space in the Egyptian film and it is discussed in relation to a wide network of corruption and chaos. By contrast, with the exception of one scene in which we see a political prisoner subjected to physical torture, the Moroccan film tells a quiet, contemplative story of the suppressed memory of the so-called 'Lead Years'. This film is full of symbolic images not to simply remind us with

the past torture or to mere delegitimize the torture and imprisonment without trial, but to importantly show, through a journey backwards, the potential of memory to overcome the pressure of erasure or the power of obliteration. In so doing, the film, through voicing the complaints of the political detainees, calls for the politics of compensation, reconciliation and democratic citizenship.

The resistance raised in the films *Thirst* and *Memory in Detention* avoids the pitfall of demonizing the Other. These two films focus on the discourse of oppression and how to refute it rather than on the individual characters, because it is the discourse out of which such oppressive relations can be resurrected in the present and future. By contrast, the third Moroccan film under analysis, *Kharboucha: Ma Yadum Hal* (Kharboucha: Nothing Is Eternal, 2008) by Hamid Zoughi, brings into light the pivotal role of the gendered subaltern in the process of social change through a discussion of the revolutionary acts and the sever diatribes shikha Hadda Zaidia or the so-called Kharboucha levels against caid Aissa Ben Omar, a leader who is represented in the film as one of the most despotic figures in the nineteenth century Morocco. This film explores how Kharboucha's words have undermined the authority of one of the most powerful tyrant, as the film depicts, and caused him to lose his grip even on his entourage. Compatible with Said's emphasis on the vital role of the word in the power struggle, Kharboucha's rebellious songs are represented to be as subversive as the force of weaponry; they are shown to be very detrimental to Ben Omar's political, socio-economic and religious authorities in the sense that they not only mobilize her tribe to fight against the leader's tyranny, but also circulates to the veins of the governor's entourage and servants and powerfully clothes them with a revolutionary spirit. Therefore, unlike Spivak who argues that the subaltern sexed subject cannot speak because of being doubly oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy, the Moroccan shikha, here, does speak and her speech proves her potential to turn the leader's submissive entourage into rebellious and revolutionary icons. In a very significant and climax ending, the camera displays her smiling from within the wall as she sees leader's entourage, tribe and servants rebelling against him and reciting her politically subversive lyric. In so doing, the film profoundly dismantles the colonialist and nationalist stereotypes that depict shikhat and, by extension, female performers as uprooted and vulnerable who can be easily swept by seduction and/or coercion. The leader could not repress or neutralize her lyrical attack against him despite of employing every means available. In this film, Spivak's argument of the inability of the gendered subaltern to develop autonomous consciousness has been extremely challenged.

Like the afore-mentioned Moroccan and Egyptian films, the Yemeni films prove the potential of the subalterns to change or, at least, alleviate the conditions of their oppression.

They actually go in line with their above-mentioned Arab counterparts in terms of the orientation. However, spatiality does matter in dictating the thematic selection for the film director, because, as Edward Said argues in his *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, the text is deeply involved in the sociopolitical, temporal and spatial context. On this account, the Yemeni film directors draw heavily on problematizing man-woman relationships—issues which appear to be more relevant to people concerns—so as to partly create a space for critiques of Eurocentric, class and patriarchal epistemologies and to partly get their films accessible to a wider audience.

Through exploration of the relationships between the Yemeni insiders and the Italian outsider as well as between the aristocratic young photographer Tariq and the lower-class orphaned artist Inas, Beder Ben Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a*, like Khan's *Factory Girl*, highlights the role love, as a mode of vision, could play in binding the spaces that are represented by the Eurocentric and nationalist grand narratives to be dichotomous and difficult, if impossible, to meet. It portrays the discourse of love as fuel for strengthening human bonds and for pushing people from identification based on class, gender, religion or nation to that based on liberal human consciousness. The resistance being waged by the director is not simply over the promotion of old Sana'a as a great historical city, but it is more importantly over the emergence of counter-stereotypic discourses that call into question the Orientalist images of the Arab world, particularly of woman, as well as the nationalist historiographical accounts of the lower classes. What seems to set this film apart from the previous ones, on the level of form, is its much focus on dialogue on the assumption of being a core in the process of unthinking the essentialist and unverified images of the cultural Other.

Through the interactive contacts between Federico on the one hand and the old city of Sana'a and its indigenous people on the other, the film disproves the Western stereotypic representation of Arab and Yemeni people as backward or threatening. Federico's description of old Sana'a in relation to its cultural abundance proves that the Arab and Yemeni people have just as much creativity, intelligence and beauty as people in the West. In a similar vein, the images forged about the local people in this film are incomparable to what the Orientalist discourse has cultivated; they are shown to be civilized, sociable and friendly rather than as barbaric and hostile, with the intention to hurt Westerners. In so doing, the film destabilizes the Eurocentric and racist epistemology in favor of reconstructing multiculturalism and anti-racism whereby human relationship and exchange can never be bound by borders like race, color, gender or religion.

Likewise, through delving into in-depth comparisons between the aristocratic female Bilqis and the lower-class Inas, the film makes it clear that what have been socially recognized as upper-class people can by no means have monopoly over power, beauty and ethics, because these terms are fluid, multidimensional and more spiritual than materialistic in content. The essentialist framing of people on the ground of their class or gender turns to be absolutely unfair and misleading as well. Although the film is not uncritical of class hierarchy and the mechanisms of social domination within the Yemeni context, the relationships between Yemeni social classes are shown to be slippery and complex rather than stable and unitary. The film shows situations in which the aristocratic family requires the help and intervention not only of the middle-class members, but also of the lower-class people. That is to say, the static boundaries between the seemingly dichotomous categories such as upper class/lower-class, outsider/insider and tradition/,modernity seem , at least occasionally, to fall away in favor of constructing third space which brings them all together. The third space can be understood, here, in terms of creating not only possibilities but also overriding necessities of meeting between people of different classes and cultures in both private and public life. In short, this film represents identity as a confusing puzzle; the more one tries to resolve it, the more he/she reveals its ambiguity. For this reason, cultural differences should not be viewed as an impediment to human consensus, but rather as a space of mutual enrichment.

Unlike Khan's *Factory girl* (2014) and Ben Hirsi's *A New Day in Old Sana'a* (2005) in which gender is discussed in relation to class and profession, al-Salami's *I am Nujoum, Aged 10 and Divorced* (2014) is heavily devoted to problematizing the gendered subaltern agency in terms of age. Thematically, women's resistance against being driven into forced or arranged marriage represents a common thread, although with different points of focus, between the films under study that address gender issues. Further, the discourse of patriarchy whose victims are not preconditioned to be always women is represented to be enacted and effectuated by both men and women, and so does the resistance to it. But, what distinguishes this film from the others is that it gives primary attention to the controversial question of early marriage. Methodologically, this film, like all the films under study, works on two interrelated levels: criticism of social injustice and celebration of the voice of resistance articulated in the current film by the female child, Nujoum, whom the patriarchal attempts to render her obscured and unnoticed make her more starred and noticed.

In contrast to Spivak's argument of the incapability of the gendered subaltern to get her voice heard in the South Asian colonial context, the child bride in the Yemeni context proves her capability to voice her agency and legitimize her rights under a complex and

multilayered patriarchal system; she deconstructs the patriarchal legitimacy on the conjugal, familial, religious, tribal and legal levels, and hence reconstructs an alternative legitimacy in which woman's and child's rights are considered as an integral part of human rights. Her vehement struggle in defense of the child's rights elicits the sympathy and support of the judge, human right organizations and lawyers and even presses reporters who circulate her story on wider scale. In so doing, the film celebrates the heroism of the female protagonist for paving the way to reform the family law in a country lacking legislation pertaining to the minimum age of marriage. In its approaching of the child bride's struggle with her spouse, her mother-in-law, her parents as well as the tribal, religious and legal authorities, the film builds solidarity against the discourse of child marriage and not against the entrapped individuals whose answers throughout the film unveil that they are swept by unjust societal norms as well as by male-centric interpretation of religion, which conform neither to human rights nor to the textual sources of Islam. Thus, to fight patriarchy, which is portrayed in the film as complex rather than merely oppressive, we shall first, as feminists and subaltern studies theorists emphasize, rectify the elitist historiography.

While al-Salami's film goes against the perpetuation of hegemonic relationships through setting up the space for resistance to the practices of the arranged and early marriage, the last film discussed in this dissertation, *10 Days before the Wedding* by Amr Gamal, depicts requited love, and symbolically reciprocal relationships, as being worth fighting for. In the Egyptian film *Factory Girls* by Khan and the Yemeni film *A New Day in Old Sana'a* by Ben Hirsi, love is represented as an effective therapy for those who are swallowed by class and gender disparity and hence as a bridge to a third space in which the boundaries between the seemingly hierarchal categories would be blurred. Likewise, Gamal's film envisions love as a unifying force against the pressures of war that keep pushing the marginalized Yemeni couple and symbolically their country towards split and disintegration. The image of love raised in the film is represented neither to be based on fantasies and illusions nor to be driven by materialistic motives at the expense of spiritual values. Rather, it is portrayed to be grounded on the empirical struggle for social and human justice.

The question of the subaltern consciousness is of paramount importance to challenge the hegemonic ideology. Unlike Spivak who homogenously argues that the subaltern consciousness is driven by the thought of the elite, the film opposes this idea of generalization by giving two contrasting visions of the subaltern consciousness; it differentiates between the reactions of those who are swept by the elitist consciousness and those who are driven by their self-consciousness. For example, Rasha's family is seen

influenced by the mainstream ideology that sees coalition with the capitalists as the best option to escape the consequences of their economic crises. On the contrary, Rasha, along with her fiancé and her younger brother, appears to have developed an autonomous consciousness, which pushes her to determine that love marriage and human consensus are worth fighting for. For the director, the relations that are built on unstable grounds such as socio-economic-based incentives would be actually disordered and unstable. As detailed in the analytical part, the film differentiates between love without justice that can lead to essentialism, dogmatism and even nativism, which Said, Fanon, Hall, and Shohat and Stam, among others, abhor, and love with justice that can function as a signifier of consciousness and, therefore, a means of unthinking essentialism in all its manifestations. Because of the couple's consciousness of the fluidity of identity, the decline of their economic structure loses its grip on their spirit. Their deteriorating economic status could not reduce them in the eyes of each other as well as in the eyes of their relatives, because they are represented to be imbued with human values such as love, altruism, compassion, loyalty and challenge that endow them with power and agency. Through complicating the hurdles that beset the path of the couple's union, the director levels an implicit condemnation of the foreign intervention and national despotism that fuel conflict and provoke a breakdown in the social fabric, and he foretells their failure through featuring the couple's triumph from within the rubble.

In the analysis of the content and formal components of the films in question, the storytelling of the films works side by side with the audio-visual techniques like camera angles and movements, long take, voice over, music, aural metaphors, setting, lighting, flashback, verbal and non-verbal dialogue and so on, as it is shown in the analytical part, to reinforce the complexity of power relations through which power is shown to be contested and resisted in innumerable ways that make of the culture of mutual recognition and the politics of multiculturalism an inevitable option. The films under analysis offer a panoramic picture of the cultural resistance in contemporary Arab cinema in relation to its responses to the colonialist and neocolonialist, Eurocentric, nationalist, Marxist and feminist historiographies as well as to the discourses and practices of oppression played out through the lines of class, religion, office, gender and age. Thus, one of the difficulties I faced in my study was how to select films that synthesize such diverse forms of resistance within the common thread of articulating the culture of mutual recognition and the politics of multiculturalism. However, a comprehensive treatment of the issue of cultural resistance in Arab cinema cannot be fully treated within a single study. For example, what remain missing are the forms of resistance of the migrant's exile in the diaspora contexts. That is to say, the

extent to which the diaspora individuals and communities could reconfigure power relations and reconstruct their sense of identity is something that needs focused research in which films from various locations could be compared, particularly in terms of their temporal connections. Further, it would be better for further researchers to include extra films from other Arab countries in order to elicit more findings about the discursive construction of resistance in Arab cinema and compare them to the ones obtained in this dissertation. In addition, further comparative researches of the representations of the power struggle in the Occidentalist and non-mainstream national filmic texts vis-à-vis, respectively, their Orientalist and mainstream national films would be more interesting.

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